DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Still imperial? The White House, the Vietnam syndrome and the politics of military intervention in the United States. A study of presidential deployment decisions: 1982-1995

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MacDonald, John Philip

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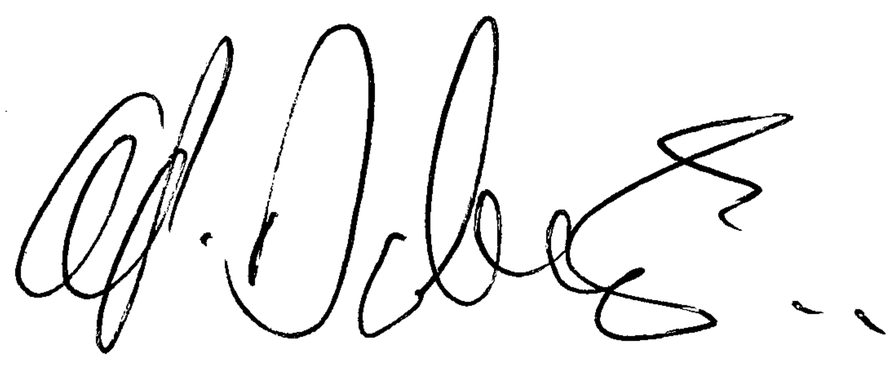
Declaration

I declare that I am the author of this thesis and that, unless otherwise stated, all references cited have been consulted by me. The work of which this thesis is a record is original. It has not previously been accepted for a higher degree.

SIGNED:  DATE: 31st April 2009

John Philip MacDonald

I confirm, as thesis supervisor, that the conditions of the relevant Ordinance and Regulations for the PhD degree have been fulfilled.

SIGNED:  DATE: 31st April 2009

Prof. Alan P. Dobson

Chapter 1

Introduction

How has the Vietnam War affected America's response to international conflicts? Have American Presidents been less likely to sanction a US military response to international conflicts in the post-Vietnam era? Has their ability to deploy US forces been weakened in any way by the Vietnam experience? This study seeks answers to these questions by examining how American Presidents responded to some of the major international conflicts of the post-Vietnam era, between 1982 and 1995. It looks at how they sought to lead America's responses to these conflicts and how far they were able to enact, and publicly 'sell', their chosen deployment decisions in the face of opposition from within the American public-political arena, especially from Congress.

This focus is steered by one of the most prominent assumptions as to why the deployment of US force has been so controversial during the post-Vietnam era. Namely, that America's experience of the Vietnam War gave rise to a Vietnam Syndrome which has helped to sustain a palpable conflict-aversion within the Americans polity.[1] White House efforts to assuage the concerns of domestic

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[1] There is a wealth of literary reference to the Vietnam Syndrome. See for example: Michael T. Klare (1982), *Beyond the "Vietnam Syndrome". US Interventionism in the 1980s.* The Institute of Policy Studies; Martin Staniland, 'Africa, the American Intelligentsia, and the Shadow of Vietnam', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 98, No. 4, Winter 1983-1984; Ole R. Holsti & James N. Rosenau (1984), *American Leadership in World Affairs. Vietnam and the Breakdown of Consensus*, George Allen & Unwin; Marilyn B. Young (1991), *The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990*, Harper Perennial; George C. Herring, 'America and Vietnam: The Unending War', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 5, Winter 1991-1992; Arnold R. Isaacs (1997), *Vietnam Shadows. The War, Its Ghosts and Its Legacy*, The Johns Hopkins University Press; Charles E. Neu (ed.) (2000), *After Vietnam. Legacies of a Lost War*, The Johns Hopkins University Press; Jon Roper (2000), *The American Presidents. Heroic Leadership From Kennedy to Clinton*, Edinburgh University Press; Richard Sobel (2001), *The Impact of Public Opinion on US Foreign Policy Since Vietnam*, Oxford University Press, New York; Trevor B. McCrisken (2003), *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam. US Foreign Policy Since*

deployment-opponents otherwise have, some commentators contend, been hindered by the fact that many Americans have been less trustful of presidential solicitations on the use of military force since the Vietnam War, and are 'no longer automatically willing to accept arguments involving direct US military intervention'.[2]

Much has been written about the Vietnam Syndrome, its roots, its manifestations and its impact upon post-Vietnam US foreign policy. However, less attention has been paid to precisely how American Presidents have 'dealt' with the Syndrome as they have taken deployment decisions. This study seeks to shed light on this area. It examines presidential 'performance' as the White House responded to three of the major international conflicts of the post-Vietnam era: Lebanon (1982-84); Kuwait (1990-1991) and the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia Herzegovina (1992-1995). It examines the decisions that Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton took in responding to these conflicts, the domestic deployment-opposition they faced as they decided to deploy US forces, and how far this opposition hindered their ability to enact their chosen policies. Finally, it seeks to illuminate how far the experience of the Vietnam War may have influenced these processes. This study asks important questions. Has the Vietnam experience really generated greater domestic challenges to Presidents wishing to deploy US forces during the post-Vietnam era? Or have Presidents continued to dictate and lead policy in this all-important policy area? If presidential foreign policymaking was decried as 'Imperial' in the aftermath of the

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1974, Palgrave Macmillan; Lloyd C. Gardner & Marilyn B. Young (eds.) (2007), *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam. Or How To Not Learn From the Past*, The New Press: New York; London. See also, Joseph Nye Jr, 'Domestic Environments of U.S. Foreign Policymaking', in Arnold L. Horelick (ed.) (1986), *US-Soviet Relations. The Next Phase*, RAND/UCLA Center for the Study of Soviet Behaviour, Cornell University Press, 115.

[2] One can, of course, justifiably ask whether the American public *has ever* 'automatically' accepted such arguments. Young (1991), p. 314; Peter J. Schraeder, 'From Ally to Orphan. Understanding US Policy towards Somalia after the Cold War', in James M. Scott (ed.) (1998), *After The End. Making US Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era*, Duke University Press, pp. 346-347; Roper (2000), pp. 3 & 11; Sobel (2001), p. 4; Gardner & Young (2007), p. 8.

The Vietnam experience is also widely seen to have left an indelible mark on a US military establishment which watched American ground forces decline in both discipline and efficiency as the Vietnam campaign progressed. This startling degeneration prompted a longstanding Pentagon wariness over involving US troops in any foreign crisis which might re-invoke Vietnam's dysfunctions. The deployment-caution fomented by the Vietnam experience has evidenced itself with subsequent consistency as the military chiefs have counselled post-Vietnam Presidents on the use of military force.[5]

It was these various fragmentations and disenchantments – both within and out-with government – which, for Lloyd Gardner and Marilyn B. Young, came to be referred to as 'the Vietnam Syndrome'. Designated a 'national illness' by Gardner and Young, the Syndrome has persisted throughout the post-Vietnam years as America has remained fixated by, and frequently divided over, the Vietnam experience and what it counsels for the nation's foreign policy.[6] It is this ongoing Vietnam fixation which is popularly assumed to underpin the reluctance that many Americans feel when they are asked to support the deployment of US forces. Repeatedly throughout the post-Vietnam years, commentators have pointed to this reluctance as evidence of the nation's fear that the US military 'might once again suffer the massive military casualties of Vietnam'.[7] America's apparent deployment-aversion has thus become somewhat notorious, a subject of focus and study in its own right. Described by Lord David Owen as 'the exposed jugular of American foreign policy', the trepidation which America persistently seems to demonstrate when faced with the possibility of seeing US troops deployed remains, for many commentators,

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[5] On the dysfunctionality of US forces in Vietnam see, for example, Michael Maclear (1981), *The Ten Thousand Day War. Vietnam: 1945-1975*, Avon Books, chapter 17, especially pp. 269-271 & 279-281.
[6] Gardner & Young (2007), p. 8.
[7] Ibid.

Vietnam experience, does the evidence of the post-Vietnam period suggest that this designation is now redundant? [3]

The Vietnam Syndrome – a brief introduction

Whilst the roots and the various manifestations of the Vietnam Syndrome will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter, it is worth furnishing the reader with a brief overview of the concept – and its notional implications for presidential leadership on the use of military force – at this early stage. The Vietnam Syndrome refers to the fallout from America's involvement in the Vietnam War and the fact that America's response to that involvement went far beyond a sombre reflection of military defeat and the loss of nearly 60,000 American lives. The nature of America's escalating involvement in Vietnam, the various strategies employed in the pursuit of victory, and the dominant role played by the White House throughout this period, is broadly seen to have fractured America's 'political and cultural consensus' and unravelled the nation's traditional constitutional relationships. It left political and media critics decrying an 'Imperial Presidency' which had broken America's constitutionally mandated checks and balances and had grasped war-making authority from Congress.[4]

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[3] The label 'Imperial Presidency' derives from Arthur Schlesinger's thesis of the same name. See: Arthur Schlesinger Jr. (2005), *The Imperial Presidency*, Mariner Books; reprint edition. See also: Richard E. Neustadt (1990), *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership From Roosevelt to Reagan*, New York, Free Press; Norman A. Graebner, 'The President as Commander in Chief: A Study in Power', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 57, No. 1, January 1993; Fred I. Greenstein (2004), *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to George W. Bush*, Princeton University Press, second revised edition.

[4] Klare (1982), p. 1; Holsti & Roesnau (1984), p. 249.

the most vivid sign that the Vietnam Syndrome exists *and* that it is a potent factor in the making of US foreign policymaking.[8]

But precisely *how* have America's Vietnam-inspired deployment-aversions evidenced themselves throughout the post-Vietnam era? And just how much of an obstacle has the Vietnam Syndrome *really* been to American Presidents as they have taken deployment decisions throughout this period? In pursuing answers to these questions, the study proceeds by acknowledging that whatever 'role' the Vietnam Syndrome may have played in post-Vietnam US foreign policymaking, it certainly has not actually *proscribed* force deployments. This acknowledgement can be justified by pointing to one glaring aspect of post-Vietnam US foreign policy – the sheer scale of US militarism during this period. Since America's withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, American Presidents – both Republican *and* Democratic – have deployed US forces to conflicts in Lebanon, Grenada, Kuwait, Somalia, Haiti, Iraq, Macedonia and Kosovo, to name but a few. Indeed, at the time of writing, Jimmy Carter remains the only post-Vietnam President to have kept the United States out of war or major military interventions.[9] So much, sceptics might say, for the idea of a potent Vietnam Syndrome and a chastened post-Vietnam White House.

However, whilst it is clear that the Vietnam Syndrome clearly has not actually *stopped* post-Vietnam Presidents from deploying US troops, it is equally clear that the passage of post-Vietnam US foreign policy has been replete with political, media and

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[8] This designation comes from Lord David Owen, the former British Foreign Secretary who was the European Union's negotiator with the warring factions during the war in Bosnia Herzegovina (1992-1995). See David Owen (1995), *Balkan Odyssey*, New York: Harcourt Brace, p. 109. See also, Dana Allin (2002), *NATO's Balkan Interventions*, Adelphi Paper 347, The International Institute for Strategic Affairs, Oxford University Press, p. 30; Michael Howard (2001), *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and International Order*, Profile Books, p. 102.

[9] Bruce W. Jentleson, 'Who, Why, What and How: Debates Over Post-Cold War Military Intervention', in Robert J. Lieber (ed.) (1997), *Eagle Adrift. American Foreign Policy at the End of the Century*, Longman Publishing, p. 40; Melvin Small (1996), *Democracy & Diplomacy. The Impact of Domestic Politics on US Foreign Policy, 1789-1994*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 135-136.

academic reference to the Syndrome and its influence upon White House use-of-force decision-making. Commentators such as Jon Roper, for example, have seen fit to declare that the Vietnam War has defined the parameters within which presidential leadership has been framed throughout the post-Vietnam years; in a similar vein, Brian Balogh contends that 'in foreign policy and military affairs, the lingering power of the "Vietnam syndrome" is well known'.[10]

It thus seems that the 'relationship' between the Vietnam Syndrome and presidential deployment decision-making requires attention and clarification. This study seeks to provide it. It aims to establish precisely what the Vietnam Syndrome *has* represented to US Presidents throughout the post-Vietnam years. Has it really made America more deployment-averse? Has it nourished the ability of the post-Vietnam Congress to 'significantly reverse presidential authority on the use of force'?[11] Or have Presidents continued to dictate and lead policy in this area, very much in keeping with their constitutionally mandated role as Commander-in-Chief of US forces? It is these questions which steer the focus of this study.

Research assumptions

In striving to answer these questions, this study aims to paint as complete a picture as possible of the various processes which have surrounded some of the major US troop deployments of the post-Vietnam era. It seeks to expose four key issues. Firstly, how and why post-Vietnam Presidents have chosen to deploy US forces to international

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[10] Roper (2000), p. 3; Brian Balogh, 'The Domestic Legacy of the Vietnam War', in Neu (ed.) (2000), p. 26.

[11] Joseph L. Nogee, 'Congress and the Presidency: The Dilemma of Policy-Making in a Democracy' in John Spanier & Joseph L. Nogee (eds.) (1981*), Congress, the Presidency and American Foreign Policy*, New York: Pergamon, p. 189.

crises. Secondly, how the Vietnam Syndrome has 'confronted' Presidents as they have deliberated this option. Thirdly, how Presidents and their administrations have responded when 'faced' with the Syndrome at such times. Fourthly, the extent to which Presidents have been able to assuage or deflect domestic opposition and enact their chosen deployment decisions throughout the post-Vietnam years. The focus of the study is thus divided between the major international conflicts which the White House faced between 1982 and 1995, the decisions that Presidents made in relation to these conflicts, and the public-political debates, commentaries and communications which accompanied these processes.

If it is presidential decisions to deploy US forces, and the manner in which these decisions have taken, which have given rise to the domestic fears and criticisms so popularly associated with the Vietnam Syndrome throughout the post-Vietnam years, then the principal focus of this study seems to be obvious. The study focuses heavily upon the deliberations and the decisions of Presidents as they have taken deployment decisions throughout the post-Vietnam years. It also examines the interactions and dynamics between Presidents and their 'inner-circles' of civilian and military decision-makers, as they sought to conceptualise and execute effective deployment decisions during this period. Also relevant are the broader political interactions in Washington at such times; most notably those between the White House and Capitol Hill, as the White House has responded to Congress' efforts to impose its own will on Presidents' deployment decisions. By examining the interactions between the White House and Capitol Hill, it should be possible to see just how far the White House has been able to enact its chosen responses to foreign conflicts throughout the post-Vietnam period. If a President's chosen policy preferences can be highlighted, and if it is shown that those policies were enacted

even in the face of congressional opposition, then it suggests that Presidents *have* continued to enjoy political dominance in this policy area.

Aside from examining post-Vietnam White House deployment *decisions*, it is assumed that a focus upon the *debates* that these decisions have prompted will also shed light on the relevant issues. The rationale for focussing upon Washington's deployment debates is based upon a quite simple assumption; namely, that since the Vietnam Syndrome is a manifestation of public-political America's post-Vietnam conflict-aversions, then it may be rendered 'discernible' if one scrutinises the opinions, criticism and demands which have emanated from Congress and the American media as the White House has taken deployment decisions during the post-Vietnam years.

There is much to recommend the wisdom of focussing upon Washington's deployment debates *as well as* the policymaking processes they surround. This is because – very much in keeping with the 'democratic ideal' – public-political opposition and debate has represented an increasingly significant aspect of the politics of military intervention in the United States during the post-Vietnam era.[12] If the need to take deployment decisions has become one of the dominant characteristics of the modern American presidency, an equally defining challenge of the office has been the need for the White House to publicly justify these decisions to an American public-political arena, sections of which – most notably the Congress – have frequently voiced opposition to the deployment of US troops. It is, of course, this domestic deployment-opposition which so many commentators designate as a vigorous manifestation of the Vietnam Syndrome.

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[12] Jon Western (2005), *Selling Intervention and War. The Presidency, the Media and the American Public*, The Johns Hopkins University Press p. 4.

It is important to note that the controversy which typically accompanies presidential deployment decisions should probably not be attributed *solely* to America's Vietnam experience. For a start, it is clear that the use of military force was provoking debate and protest in America even before its very inception as an independent nation state.[13] It is also the case that Presidents' deployment decisions take place within the context of a liberal democratic political system in which competition, opposition and criticism are a given, even on issues which are *infinitely less serious* than those which may result in people being killed by official sanction of the US government.[14] Presidents certainly do *not* have to be contemplating something as grave as the deployment of US forces in order to find themselves on the receiving end of strident political and media criticism, and accusations that their policy decisions are not reflecting the will of the nation. However, given that such an adversarial partisan dynamic pervades the day-to-day routine of liberal democratic politicking in the United States, and given that any presidential decision to deploy US forces amounts to a conscious decision to send young Americans to fight, kill, and possibly die in a distant conflict-zone, it is little surprise that Washington's political battles are 'especially evident' when US Presidents are deliberating the deployment of US forces.[15]

This acknowledgement notwithstanding, there is little doubt that the Vietnam experience *has* greatly increased the intensity of these 'battles'; it has also provided an emotive and widely-recognised reference for those wishing to voice opposition to

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[13] Ted Gottfried (2006), *The Fight for Peace. A History of Antiwar Movements in America*, Twenty-First Century Books.

[14] Gottfried (2006); Western (2005), p. 4; Robert C. DiPrizio (2002), *Armed Humanitarians. US Interventions from Northern Iraq to Kosovo*, Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 2; McKay (1997), pp. 187 & 190.

[15] Western (2005), pp. 4-6; Andrew Moravcik, 'Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics', *International Organisation*, Vol. 51, No. 4, Autumn 1997. See also, Small (1996).

US military action. As Joseph Nye notes, the Vietnam War heralded not just the rise of a culture of 'antiestablishment politics' in the United States but also less deference to presidential leadership on key foreign policy issues, such as the use of military force.[16] And, as Brian Balogh contends, America's continuing fixation with the rights and wrongs of the Vietnam experience has generated what is tantamount to a Vietnam Syndrome lexicon. Balogh contends that Americans have discussed and debated the Vietnam experience so extensively that certain words and terms – invariably negative and often not explicitly referring to Vietnam itself – have become synonymous with it.[17] This Vietnam 'phraseology' has become a fixture in America's foreign policy debates and has allowed American deployment-opponents to continue pointing to a recent, widely-recognised and uniquely *American* war experience (an experience which was personal to at least hundreds of thousands of Americans, one matched in emotiveness perhaps only by the American Civil War itself) as an example of why US forces should be withheld from foreign conflicts.

Given these considerations, it is hoped that a focus upon domestic-deployment during the post-Vietnam era – in particular an examination of the ways in which political and media deployment-opponents have crafted their arguments as they have sought to publicly *challenge* White House deployment decisions – will expose the ways in which the Vietnam Syndrome has evidenced itself at times when the White House has deliberated the use of US forces during this period.

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[16] Nye (1986), p. 115.

[17] Brian Balogh, 'The Domestic Legacy of the Vietnam War', in Neu (ed.) (2000), especially pp. 27-28. Balogh asserts, for example, that the noun 'quagmire' is now widely recognisable as a reference to the intractable military stalemate that the United States found itself in Vietnam. This term has consistently been used by political and media deployment-opponents in their efforts to portray the dark fate awaiting US forces if the President chooses to deploy them to foreign conflict-zones. Balogh also contends that 'mired', 'bogged down', 'drawn into' and 'traumatised' are the verbs most used to describe the Vietnam experience, whilst phrases such as 'slippery slope' is an oft-cited term which refers to the way in which the United States appeared to be dragged into a full-scale war in Vietnam. See also Roland Paris, 'Kosovo and the Metaphor War', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 117, No.3, 2002.

If the Vietnam experience has had a significant impact upon both the strength *and* the theme of deployment-opposition in the United States, then this study assumes that it *must* also have had an effect upon how Presidents have sought to publicly 'sell' their deployment decisions. Democratic convention and expectation dictates that Presidents simply cannot remain inactive in the face of emotive (and potentially damaging) public challenges to their policy decisions.[18] Since, as Siobhán McEvoy-Levy notes, an administration's 'survival and effectiveness' is dependent to a large degree upon the proficiency of its public diplomacy, it could be argued that the imperative for Presidents to communicate skilfully and persuasively is *especially* marked when it comes to their justifying of what is perhaps the most serious political decision of all – using military force.[19] This imperative may be *more marked still* if Vietnam's clouds continue to loom large every time Presidents are known to be contemplating this action. If they are to sway Americans behind force deployments (and this includes trying to convince critical legislators and journalists that the deployment in question is both necessary and just), it seems reasonable to assume that Presidents *must* try to justify their deployment decisions *not only* with reasons, pledges and ideals which appeal as broadly as possible to Americans *and* 'American values'; they must surely also do so in a way which dispels any inhibitions that the Vietnam Syndrome might place upon Americans' willingness to rally behind these decisions.

In short, the research approach of this study is based upon the assumption that if domestic deployment-opponents talk about Vietnam as they publicly argue against the proposed deployment of US forces, Presidents must also do so if they are to publicly 'sell' the deployment in question. If this is indeed the case, then the focus

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[18] Small (1996), pp. xiii &xix; Siobhán McEvoy-Levy (2001), *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy. Public Diplomacy at the End of the Cold War*, Palgrave Publishing, p. 2.
[19] McEvoy-Levy (2001), pp. 1, 2 & 13.

upon Washington's oscillating deployment debates *as well as* the conflicts and the presidential decisions which prompt them, will expose precisely *how* the subject of Vietnam has featured in Washington's deployment debates. Importantly, it should also expose what the White House has said in its efforts to 'win' these debates. If the trauma of Vietnam has 'raised the bar' in terms of what post-Vietnam Presidents have had to do in order to generate domestic support for force deployments, exposing what they have *said* as well as what they have *done* at such times, will illuminate both how they have responded to this challenge *and* how effective they have been in meeting it.

Methodology and resources

In seeking to illuminate the events, responses, decisions and rhetoric surrounding presidential deployment decisions, this study draws upon public presidential communications, congressional debates, the public pronouncements of key political and military policymakers, author interviews with policy practitioners, extensive newspaper coverage and a range of secondary sources.

These resources are used to scrutinise Washington's public-political debates across each of the three conflicts examined in this study. In each of the case studies, these resources help to paint a vivid picture of how key political, military and media actors crafted their arguments for or against deploying US forces. Given the study's particular focus upon the relationship between the White House and Capitol Hill at such times, they facilitate a particular understanding of the interactions and dynamics between the executive and legislative branches as they disputed the President's stewardship of each crisis. They expose how congressional and media actors publicly

articulated their support for, or opposition to, both the deployment in question *and* the President's performance; they also show how the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations sought to engage the opposition and criticism from these constituencies and garner domestic support for the President's deployment decisions.

Newspaper coverage is used extensively throughout this study. In each case study, the use of newspaper articles provides an invaluable insight into how key actors sought to attain interpretive dominance of both the crisis itself *and* of how the White House *should* respond to it. These sources detail not just how actors from both the executive *and* the legislative branches used the media to 'speak to America'; they also show how the American media reported the foreign crisis at the centre of these debates, how it reported the executive-legislative 'battles' over policy, and how it rated the performance of each branch in these 'battles'. Taken together, these sources provide a compelling snapshot of each crisis *and* of how public-political America responded to it.

Aside from detailing how US forces deployments have been publicly justified, opposed and debated throughout the period in question, these resources are also employed to paint an informative picture of the 'private' policymaking sphere, as the Reagan, Bush and Clinton foreign policy teams deliberated effective responses to the conflicts in Lebanon, Kuwait and Bosnia Herzegovina respectively. They are used to illuminate, amongst other things, who amongst each President's 'inner-circle' of military and civilian policy advisors advocated deploying US forces, what concerns were raised over this option and what stipulations were applied to each deployment. These resources are also employed to expose the dynamics that have existed between important policy institutions such as the State and Defence Departments during the post-Vietnam years, on the issue of using military force. As this study shows,

differences in opinion on this issue between these departments have been both marked *and* consistent throughout this period.

Perhaps most importantly, the research resources are used to provide a detailing of the 'performances' of Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton themselves as they sought to dictate and lead policy. In each case study, an intricate picture is painted not just of the role the President played as Commander-in-Chief but also of his thoughts and moods during the crisis in question, and his considerations in deciding to either deploy or withhold US forces. What is thus rendered is an instructive and personal picture of how successive Presidents have responded to international conflicts during the post-Vietnam era.

The study's scrutiny of White House deployment decision-making is revealing for other reasons. This focus unveils the extent to which these decisions are often significantly influenced *not* just by the aspirations and biases evident in the Oval Office but also by factors external to the United States itself. These factors can range from events occurring in the conflict in question (these events are well detailed in each case study), to the aspirations and decisions of *external* actors such as allied state governments, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the United Nations (UN). These various external factors may not only be decisive in steering the decisions that a President may take at any one time; they can also drive much of the domestic criticism arrayed against Presidents as they take these decisions. This study shows that American political and media critics have consistently accused Presidents of circumventing both America's constitutional prescriptions *and* its democratic conventions by acceding to the opinions and wishes of external, non-American, actors whilst ignoring those of the elected American legislature itself.

The narrative of this study is also enhanced by interviews with key policy practitioners, both civilian and military. These interviews add valuable detail and unique insight into the events, decisions and moods under scrutiny. They also add considerable corroborative weight to their interpretation. The thesis is thus richly informed by an impressive array of research resources. The dual-focus of the study also maximises the chances that these resources will effectively render the issues of interest. When employed in concert, a focus upon Washington's deployment debates *and* the conflicts and presidential decisions which prompt them, affords the best chance of illuminating not just the way in which the Vietnam Syndrome has evidenced itself throughout the post-Vietnam era, but also how far the Syndrome has hindered presidential deployment decision-making throughout this period.

The case studies – some recurring characteristics

The analytical approach adopted by this study reveals a unique insight into the key issues. Throughout the case studies, four key characteristics are both significant and recurring. Firstly, they show that whenever a foreign conflict has captured public-political attention in the United States, debates have quickly unfolded within political and media circles over the relevance of that conflict to the United States, and whether or not the deployment of US forces to that conflict is likely or necessary. This scrutiny demands not just political decisions but also public justifications for whatever decisions the President takes.

Secondly, for all the deployment-advocacy which is typically evident in Washington's deployment debates, it is often political and media *deployment-opposition* which attracts the biggest spotlight. This is in no small part due to the fact that throughout the post-Vietnam years, this opposition has consistently invoked various aspects of the Vietnam War in an effort to forward a strong and emotive argument as to why US forces should *not* be sent into the conflict in question. These poignant public challenges to, and prescriptions for, White House policy consistently seem to magnetize media attention. Because of this, Presidents who have decided to deploy US forces have consistently been forced to publicly deny comparisons between the Vietnam War and the current crisis, in their efforts to convince the American public-political arena that the deployment, and the President's stewarding of it, is both necessary and just. However, despite their esteemed status and their unique access to information and resources, Presidents' efforts to 'sell' their deployment decisions rarely – if ever – dispel deployment-opposition from within the American public-political arena. Indeed, Presidents persistently seem unable to garner broad public-political support behind their force deployments.[20] Given these difficulties in persuading domestic critics, the White House has frequently appeared to exaggerate the rationales for deploying US forces, in order to make the case. In this sense, the Vietnam Syndrome may well have 'raised the bar' in terms of what Presidents have had to do in order to publicly 'sell' force deployments; however, rather than fostering more 'honest' presidential political communications and solicitations on this issue, it may have done exactly the opposite.

Thirdly, the case studies show why cynics might well decry these White House public diplomatic efforts as merely ritualistic. This is because, despite its

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[20] David McKay (1997), *American Politics and Society*, Blackwell Publishing, Fourth Edition pp. 187 & 190.

apparently genuine efforts to 'win' these public debates throughout the post-Vietnam years, US force deployments have *not* been dependent upon presidential administrations being successful in doing so. Despite the 'democratic expectation' that the President's important political decisions will in some way reflect the national mood, this frequently does *not* happen when it comes to the use of US forces. Indeed the three case studies suggest that Presidents' deployment decisions have consistently disregarded the opposition of significant swathes of the American public-political arena, something which has invariably nourished political and media accusations that the White House is demonstrating a democratic unaccountability and hubris evocative of the Vietnam years.

Despite such accusations, Presidents do not appear to be put off by a broadly unsupportive national mood; it seems that if the President has decided to deploy US forces, his deployment plans continue apace, regardless. Thus, despite the raft of allusion to the demise of the 'Imperial Presidency' in the decade after the Vietnam War, and despite what much of the literary allusion to the Vietnam Syndrome has often implied, the public-political backlash to the Vietnam War does *not* appear to have seriously altered the President's dominance of decisions relating to the use of US forces. He remains a figure who is central to any force deployment and he is generally imperious in deciding whether and how such actions proceed. Assisted by his civilian and military 'inner-circle', Presidents frequently deny any need to consult Congress on deployment decisions and are more than willing to take deployment decisions which Congress openly opposes.[21] Executive branch unilateralism is a glaring characteristic in each case study.

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[21] Andrew J. Bacevich (2005), *The New American Militarism. How Americans are Seduced by War*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 34-35; Chalmers Johnson (2004), *The Sorrows of Empire. Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*, Verso publishing, pp. 60-61. This is discussed more in the next chapter.

Fourthly and finally, it is clear that whilst Presidents have paid considerable lip service to *rejecting* the Vietnam analogy throughout the post-Vietnam years (in order to try to dispel domestic deployment-sensitivities and rally support for the deployment of US forces), the Vietnam Syndrome *has* been manifestly evident in the ways in which they have chosen to deploy US forces. The events detailed in the three case studies demonstrate a consistent, near-obsessive, presidential preoccupation with mission-brevity and casualty-avoidance when the parameters for US troop deployments have been being designated by the Commander-in-Chief. Presidents do, it seems, very much share the concerns and sensitivities of the most ardent deployment-opponents, even if they are committed to deploying US Forces.

However, whilst the Vietnam Syndrome *does* seem to have loomed large over post-Vietnam deployment planning, its 'presence' has *not* always been viewed as baneful by the White House. The study of post-Vietnam presidential deployment decision-making is not simply a study of Presidents deciding to *deploy* US forces. For various reasons, Presidents have also chosen *not* to involve US forces in foreign crises during the post-Vietnam years and – in a stark rejoinder to the idea that the Vietnam experience imposed a blanket deployment-aversion upon the American polity – these decisions to *withhold* US forces have often come under just as much domestic criticism as have decisions to deploy. And whilst the White House has found the public invoking of the Vietnam Syndrome a hindrance to building broad public-political support *for* force deployments, it seems that *it has also found that Syndrome a useful ally when it has been unwilling to sanction this action*. This study shows that when the White House has faced criticism for refusing to use military force, the Vietnam Syndrome has been 'used' by presidential administrations to make what they clearly see as a persuasive public case for keeping US forces confined to

barracks. Chapter 6 vividly demonstrates this; it details both the Bush *and* the Clinton administrations publicly likening the war in Bosnia Herzegovina to that in Vietnam, as they sought to justify their controversial stance of remaining militarily disengaged from the Balkans conflict and its attendant humanitarian disaster.

All in all, the events detailed in this study suggest that the Vietnam experience *has* undoubtedly heightened Americans' concerns over both the deployment of US forces *and* the way in which deployments are decided and executed from the White House. Despite this, there is much to suggest that the President's dominance of deployment decision-making has continued to mirror that which was so roundly criticised during the Vietnam years. Indeed, if the epithet of the 'Imperial Presidency' has continued to infuse commentary and analysis of US foreign policy throughout the post-Vietnam era, then it is surely the President's continuing dominance of this all-important policy area which upholds the validity of the designation.

The study; structure and case study selection

This study comprises six subsequent chapters. The next two chapters aim to provide the reader with an understanding of the dynamics, issues and arguments which dominate the three case studies in chapters 4-6. Given that the Vietnam Syndrome is a concept which denotes America's social-political concerns over deploying US forces, chapters 2 and 3 provide a more detailed consideration of the Vietnam Syndrome, its roots and influence, *and* of the domestic actors, institutions and challenges that Presidents typically face as they take deployment decisions. Chapter 2 explores the context of the Vietnam Syndrome and its incorporation into the

American social-political consciousness. It details how the Syndrome has influenced both the composition and the use of the US military; it also charts the impact that it has had on the post-Vietnam presidency and Presidents' efforts to steer US foreign policy during this period.

Chapter 3 seeks to craft a broader understanding of the domestic politics of military intervention in the United States. It examines the impact that Congress, the media and public opinion are popularly thought to have on the making of US foreign policy and how they have popularly been seen to influence White House decisions in this area. The chapter focuses specifically upon why, *despite* the notional influence that these domestic constituencies enjoy, the authoritative dynamics in this area have continued to be weighted so heavily in favour of the White House. It looks specifically at how the President is able to so routinely circumvent Congress as he takes deployment decisions.

These chapters provide a broad, and necessary, background understanding in preparation for the case studies detailed in chapters 4-6. Each case study begins with a brief consideration of the President under focus and how America's Vietnam experience related to both his presidency and his deployment decisions. It then proceeds to provide an explanation of the conflict in question and its background, something which will be shown to be of considerable relevance to how the White House, and wider America, responded to it. Each case study then goes on to paint a comprehensive picture of how the White House reacted to the crisis in question and how this reaction was responded to from within the America public-political arena. Each study details the attitude of the President and his administration towards the conflict, how these attitudes were reflected in policy, and how the administration sought to publicly justify and promote that policy. How key political and media

actors responded to the White House's actions is detailed concurrently. Particular attention is paid to the executive-legislative wrangling over policy and to how successful Congress was in exercising its constitutionally-mandated empowerments in order to provide legislative input into the decision-making process. The American media's coverage of these processes is also given significant exposure – indeed, it is used extensively to illuminate the events and the debates surrounding each of the three conflicts. Each case study thus paints a vivid picture of the perceptions, debates and decisions which the conflict in question sparked, the 'role' played by the President in responding to the conflict, and the influence of the Vietnam Syndrome upon these processes.

Chapter 7 concludes the study by drawing together the evidence presented in the preceding three chapters and making some observations about what the study tells us about the relationship between the President, the Vietnam Syndrome and the politics of military intervention in the United States.

The value of the case studies

The conflicts in Lebanon, Kuwait and Bosnia Herzegovina represent just three of the many post-Vietnam conflicts to which the White House has deployed US forces. Yet they stand out as being ideal examples to focus upon for one significant reason – they were headline news in the United States and generated debate and commentary to an extent which conflicts such as the 1994 Rwandan civil war, for example, simply did not. These three conflicts generated a profusion of newspaper commentary and analysis, congressional debate, and public statements from the presiding

administrations in the form of prepared statements, media interviews and congressional testimonies. They also generated a subsequent wealth of books, journal articles and policy papers. As has already been noted, this wealth of sources constitutes a valuable and comprehensive literature which facilitates a detailed examination both of post-Vietnam America's responses to, and debates over, military intervention *and* of presidential 'performance' in this area.

Another key benefit of choosing these conflicts is that they span both the Cold War *and* post-Cold War periods, thus affording an expansive view of post-Vietnam deployment decision-making. Indeed, the temporal 'positions' of these three conflicts are ideal for exposing aspects of continuity and change across both of these periods. Was the Vietnam Syndrome more or less pertinent to Presidents after the ending of the Cold War? Did the demise of the Soviet threat change the White House view – and indeed that of the broader American public-political arena – of when it is appropriate to use military force? Has there been a consistency in the challenges and criticisms that Presidents have faced as they have taken deployment decisions throughout the post-Vietnam years? A study which focuses upon US force deployments across both the Cold War *and* the post-Cold War periods can provide informed, if not definitive, answers to these questions.

Lastly, the selection of these case studies is vindicated by the fact that they are representative of the different *types* of conflict that post-Vietnam Presidents have been faced with. The case studies suggest that it is the President's perception of a conflict, and its significance to the United States, which is perhaps the most significant influence upon whether or not US forces will be deployed. They show why the White House was so willing to deploy US forces to Lebanon in 1982 and to the Persian Gulf in 1991, but distinctly *unwilling* to deploy US forces to Bosnia

between 1992 and mid-1995. Chapter 4 demonstrates that strategic Cold War concerns and threats to Western oil supplies were significant spurs for President Reagan as he responded to Lebanon's conflict. Reagan's aspirations for a more assertive US military presence on the world stage – symbolically important to many 'Reaganites' after America's post-Vietnam nadir – were also significant. The Lebanon deployment was also part of a limited 'peacekeeping' mission, one in which America's technologically advanced arsenal was rendered somewhat irrelevant. The question of whether or not US forces should be sent into a chaotic conflict-zone, with a limited 'interposition' mandate, created considerable disagreement in Washington and offered a vivid precursor to the 'peacekeeping' and 'humanitarian intervention' debates which would divide Washington in the decade following the end of the Cold War.

Of the three conflicts examined in this study, America's engagement with the Persian Gulf crisis, detailed in chapter 5, is probably most representative of a 'classic' Westphalian imperative to intervene militarily. It shows, once again, that threats to oil supplies were instrumental in convincing President Bush of the need to enact a military response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. However, with the concurrent demise of the Soviet Union at this point, President Bush's willingness to use military force was also influenced by his desire to punish the external aggression of a nation state (in this case, Iraq) and thus demonstrate that the United States was willing to act to uphold and lead, the 'new world of freedom' that he himself had proclaimed.[22]

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[22] President Bush, 'Address to the American People from Camp David'. Maryland, 22nd November 1989, cited in McEvoy-Levy (2001), p. 56. Bush's declaration came in anticipation of the December 'peace' summit in Malta between Bush and President Gorbachev. * NB – unless stated otherwise (as above, for example), all presidential administration communications can be found (by date and statement title) in the 'public papers' sections of the presidential libraries. For the Bush Library, go to: http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php

Chapter 6 offers an insight into how the White House responded to the 'decade of humanitarian emergencies' which dominated the 1990s, and which made the terms 'ethnic cleansing' and 'genocide' dispiriting fixtures in the evolving discourses of post-Cold War international politics.[23] The chapter exposes the difficulties that these conflicts presented to the White House, creating pressures and dilemmas which shattered many of the use-of-force 'precedents' which had gone before. Should the lives of US troops be risked in order to save civilians from remote conflicts which had no immediately obvious national interest to the United States? This question dominated the presidential foreign policy agenda throughout the 1990s and saw the White House demonstrate a persistent unwillingness to demonstrate the kind of intervention-advocacy that, for example, President Bush had shown in response to the invasion of Kuwait. This new-found intervention-reluctance had intriguing implications for the White House's 'relationship' with the Vietnam Syndrome.

The diversity of these conflicts, the fact that they span both the Cold War *and* post-Cold War periods, and the fact that they were presided over by different presidential administrations, provides a suitably diverse range of crises, contexts and personalities on which to construct an understanding of the 'relationship' between the Vietnam Syndrome and post-Vietnam presidential leadership on the use of the US military. If determining where and when to use military force has become one of the most vexing issues for modern Presidents, the focus and the time-span encompassed in this study renders an extensive detailing of these vexations and paints an intriguing picture of how the Vietnam Syndrome was relevant to Presidents, their administrations, and their deployment decisions from the early 1980s to the mid-

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[23] Raimo Väyrynen, 'More Questions Than Answers: Dilemmas of Humanitarian Intervention', *Peace & Change*, Vol. 24, No. 2, April 1999, p. 174. Also: Leslie H. Gelb, 'Quelling the Teacup Wars', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 6, November/December 1994.

1990s.[24] It reveals the central role that Presidents have played in responding to international conflicts, the criticism and opposition which presidential dominance in this area has fomented within the American public-political arena, and how Presidents have engaged with this opposition as they have striven to enact effective – and broadly supported – force deployments.

The debates and divergences exposed so vividly throughout the case studies fracture one of the great myths of American foreign policy; namely, that when it comes to decisions on deploying US forces, partisan politics 'stops at the water's edge' in Washington DC and the body politic rallies to support the President and, by extension, the US troops who are to be deployed.[25] In fact, this assumption is not accurate. The evidence in this study shows that whilst Washington typically *does* rally behind force deployments, America's conflict-aversions *and* the White House's guarded dominance of the deployment decision-making process does much to foment domestic opposition, criticism and division. 'Consensus' typically only emerges once things have clearly reached a 'point of no return', with the date at which US forces are to be formally deployed, fast approaching. It is generally at *this* point that the 'water's edge' is reached and the majority of political and media dissension dissipates, a shift engendered by the acknowledgement that domestic unrest over any military mission risks compromising both the commitment to the mission *and* the American military personnel being deployed. However despite this tardy, and frequently begrudged, *final* 'consensus', the decision-making pathway leading up to this point is typically contested and Presidents' deployment decisions are often challenged up until the very last moment. It is these challenges, and how Presidents have responded to them, which provide the focus for this study.

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[24] DiPrizio (2002), p. 2.
[25] Western (2005), p. ix.

Chapter 2

The Vietnam War and After: The Vietnam Syndrome and the Battle for America's Foreign Policy

The previous chapter introduced the concept of the Vietnam Syndrome. This chapter seeks to provide a more detailed understanding of its roots, its manifestations and what it has meant for presidential leadership on the use of military force during the post-Vietnam era.

The Vietnam War – a brief overview

Even before US forces were withdrawn from Vietnam in March 1973, Americans were reflecting, with bewilderment and bitterness, on a military commitment which cost the United States an estimated $167 billion.[1] This quite staggering expenditure would continue to affect the American economy well into the 1980s.[2] However, whilst this bill is startling, it does not even begin to hint at the true cost of the conflict from the American perspective. From an engagement which started during World

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[1] There are numerous excellent accounts of the Vietnam War and American involvement in it. See, for example: Maclear (1981); Young (1991); Isaacs (1997); Neu (2000); Christian G. Appy (2006), *Vietnam: The Definitive Oral History Told From All Sides*, Ebury Press.

[2] Herring (1992); Small (1996), p 127; Appy (2006), pp. 35 & 496; Amy Belasco, Lynn J. Cunningham, Hannah Fisher & Larry A. Niksch, *Congressional Restrictions on US Military Operations in Vietnam, Laos, Somalia, and Kosovo: Funding and Non-Funding Approaches*, Congressional Research Service Report (Order Code RL 33803), 16th January, 2007, p. 2.

War Two, with Washington providing financial, logistical and intelligence support to Vietnamese nationalists fighting to free their country from both French and Japanese rule, the end of the War saw America's involvement in Vietnam escalate dramatically, as the fight against Hitler gave way to the Cold War fight against Communist expansion.

America's growing involvement in Southeast Asia saw it cast aside its self-professed commitment to anti-colonialism. In an effort to secure French cooperation in the Cold War struggle, President Truman ordered American ships to transport 13,000 French troops from the European theatre to Vietnam, in an effort to help the French regain their colony.[3] The American commitment escalated through the 1950s and 1960s as Washington sought to aid South Vietnam in its fight against the Communist North. It ultimately saw US forces sucked into leading a devastating war of attrition against North Vietnam and South Vietnamese insurgents – the Viet Cong – in which victory was ultimately unattainable at any cost that Washington was willing to pay.

America's war-fighting strategy visited a terrible devastation upon Vietnam. The country saw almost two-thirds of its southern hamlets ruined, and over 12 million acres of forest destroyed by the chemical defoliants deployed by US forces.[4] The human toll of the war was enormous. An estimated 1.1 million North Vietnamese troops (both regular soldiers and Viet Cong guerrillas) died in the fighting, with around 600,000 wounded; the South Vietnamese military suffered 224,000 deaths and more than 1 million wounded. Around 2 million Vietnamese civilians were also killed, with a further 2 million widowed, orphaned and disabled. In the economic, moral and political crisis which engulfed Vietnam in the period following the US

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[3] Appy (2006), pp. 36-39.
[4] Ibid., p. 496; Young (1991), pp. 190-191.

withdrawal from the country, a further one million Vietnamese emigrated from their homeland. [5]

Physically unscathed it may have been when compared to the carnage wrought upon Vietnam and its people, but the conflict left the United States facing a devastation all of its own. Whilst the fighting claimed the lives of over 58,000 American service personnel, and wounded over 300,000 others, America's failure in Vietnam was not only costly in military terms; it also shattered the confidence of America's leadership, and fractured Americans' views of their country, its leaders, its place in the world.[6] Central to this dejection was an awareness of what the White House had done in its efforts to win the war; not only in terms of the war-fighting strategy it had sanctioned, but also in relation to the enormity of the deceit it had sustained in the pursuit of victory. Congress may well have formally sanctioned US involvement in Vietnam through its passing of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964; however, critics subsequently accused the White House of taking this involvement well beyond what the legislature had consented to.

In prosecuting an 'undeclared and unexplained war' whose details were often hidden from the American public, successive American Presidents had supported a corrupt, oppressive and unrepresentative government in South Vietnam. They had also authorised covert Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operations in the region and had sanctioned military strategies which relied upon the widespread use of napalm and white phosphorous, cluster bombs, 'free-fire zones', and had even flirted with the possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons.[7] Evidence that US military support and

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[5] Appy (2006), pp. 163-164 & 496; Isaacs (1997), pp. 190-191; Neu (2000), p. xvii.
[6] Michael Leigh (1976), *Mobilizing Consent. Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy, 1937-1947*, Greenwood Press, p. 170; Appy (2006), p. 163; Herring (1992), pp. 116, 117 & 104.
[7] M. J. Heale (2001), *The Sixties in America. History, Politics and Protest*, BAAS Paperbacks, Edinburgh University Press, p. 78; Young (1991), pp. 129-131 & 190-191; Appy (2006), pp. 25-27.

operations had also extended illegally into both Laos and Cambodia during this period – in a manner, to an extent and for a duration that were not always fully revealed to Congress and the wider American public at the time – indicated to Americans that the nation's foreign policy was being steered by a secretive, executive elite whose actions did not always reflect the values it espoused.[8]

Americans' scepticism over the role of the White House in these events was further nourished by revelations over presidential actions in both escalating and sustaining American involvement in the war. In his efforts to attain congressional backing for expanding US military involvement in Vietnam, President Lyndon Johnson had been somewhat liberal with the truth when, on 4th August 1964, he appeared on national television to relay details of two incidents off the coast of North Vietnam. Presenting them as a justification for escalating US involvement in the region, Johnson's interpretation of the 'Gulf of Tonkin incident' was that North Vietnamese patrol boats had launched torpedoes at two American warships, something he described as an act of 'open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America'.[9] In truth, the event bore little resemblance to the picture painted by the President, but the 'murky evidence' he provided to Congress on the issue was sufficient to see the passing of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, on August 7th 1964. Thus, whilst US involvement in military operations inside Vietnam had actually been underway since 1961 (albeit at a modest level), the ratification of this Resolution *formally* legitimised US military operations against North Vietnam and catalysed a massive escalation in the US military commitment. It is significant to note that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution presented to Congress was not actually

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[8] Small (1996), p. 129; Young (1991), pp. 234-238 & 281-284; Appy (2006), pp. 377-382.
[9] Appy (2006), pp. 112-113; Stephen E. Ambrose and Douglas G. Brinkley (1997), *Rise to Globalism. American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, Penguin, 8th revised edition, p. 200.

written in response to the incident in question but had actually been completed *two months beforehand* and then set aside, awaiting a suitable incident which would both justify its presentation to Congress and (Johnson hoped) guarantee its passage through both branches of the legislature.[10]

If President Johnson's behaviour might have forced Americans to question presidential integrity, there was worse to come from the man who succeeded him. Incredibly, Johnson's 'abdication' speech, on 31st March 1968, did not close the book on what would ultimately become a saga of executive branch deception over Vietnam.[11] Indeed, once in office, Johnson's successor Richard Nixon scripted a whole new chapter of his own. Subsequently described as the most deceitful of any twentieth century president, Nixon won the 1968 presidential election in no small part because of his stated commitment to bring an 'honorable end' to the war in Vietnam. However, his assumption of office saw him do little to accomplish this. As well as sanctioning ever more draconian measures to nullify escalating domestic opposition to the war, President Nixon proceeded to steer an increasingly punitive Vietnam policy, one which was largely shielded from the media, the public, and Congress.[12] Whilst his commitment to the strategy of *Vietnamization* – in which control of military ground operations was to be passed to the South Vietnamese government and military – was evidenced by the staged withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam (from 539,000 in June 1969 to 21,500 by January of 1973), Nixon made no commitment to a *complete* US withdrawal; nor did he place any limitation on US combat operations in the region.[13] On the contrary, US ground forces briefly extended operations into

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[10] Appy (2006), pp. 112 & 398; Heale (2001), p. 78; Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p. 200; Western (2005), pp. 100-101.
[11] Graham Evans & Jeffrey Newnham (1998), *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations*, Penguin Publishing, p. 562.
[12] Appy (2006), p. 309; Small (1996), p. 128.
[13] Belasco, Cunningham, Fisher & Niksch, 16th January, 2007, pp. 1-2.

eastern Cambodia in April of 1970, whilst the US Air Force continued bombing at extremely high levels across the region.[14] In fact, far from presiding over an honourable disengagement from Vietnam and an end to Vietnam's war, the hostilities continued for another six years under Nixon, killing a further one million Vietnamese and several hundred thousand Laotians and Cambodians. Forty percent of American service personnel who died in Vietnam did so during the Nixon presidency.[15] The subsequent Watergate scandal, where an unfolding litany of evidence showed that Nixon and his re-election committee had employed bribery, burglary and federal agencies in order to sabotage the Democrats' 1972 election campaign, further inflamed the smouldering climate of divisiveness, mistrust, and recrimination in Washington DC. [16]

Unsurprisingly, these events greatly damaged America's perception of the presidency and added a keenness to the nation's growing unease over both its foreign policy *and* the dominance of this policy by an apparently-untouchable White House elite. In fact, this unease was evident long before America's formal disengagement from Vietnam. Increasingly opposed to what some legislators were decrying as a 'presidential war', Congress had, by early 1970, taken significant steps to curtail the expansiveness of Nixon's Vietnam policy.[17] In January 1971, legislators enacted the Cooper-Church Amendment, which prohibited the appropriation of funds to support

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[14] Ibid., p. 2.
[15] Appy (2006), p. 309.
[16] Despite its association with the 1972 election campaign, Watergate actually had its roots in the Vietnam War, when a May 1969 *New York Times* report broke the news that US forces were engaged in 'secret' bombing missions over Cambodia. This revelation led Nixon to order FBI 'wiretaps' of those suspected of leaking this information; it led to the subsequent targeting of around two hundred journalists, celebrities and activists who had publicly opposed the war. He then authorised illegal CIA FBI and IRS wiretaps on individuals from this 'enemies list'. See: Small (1996), p. 129; Appy (2006), pp. 430-431.
[17] John L. S. Girling (1980), *America and the Third World; Revolution and Intervention*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 6.

US ground operations inside Cambodia.[18] After the January 1973 cease-fire agreement, Congress also cut off funds for US combat operations 'in or over or from the shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia'. It did, however, continue to authorise finance for the drawdown of US forces, until March of 1973.[19]

Perhaps most significantly of all, Congress passed the War Powers Act, on 7th November 1973.[20] Passed in both Houses, over the veto of President Nixon, this hugely symbolic measure was driven by broadly-held legislative concerns that an 'Imperial Presidency' had now broken America's constitutionally mandated checks and balances and had grasped war-making authority from Congress.[21] The substance of the Act very much reflected these concerns. Section 3 stipulated that the President has, 'in every possible instance', to consult with Congress before introducing US Armed forces into hostilities or imminent hostilities. Section 4 (a) (1) of the Act stated that the President should formally report to Congress any introduction of US forces into hostilities or imminent hostilities. With the submission – or a requirement of a submission – of this report, the deployment in question would then have to be terminated within 60 to 90 days unless Congress formally endorsed the deployment in question or agreed to extend the deployment time-frame.[22] The enactment of the War Powers Act thus represented a clear statement of intent on the part of Congress to reassert its foreign policymaking authority vis-à-vis the White House, and to ensure

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[18] Appy (2006), p. 494.
[19] Belasco, Cunningham, Fisher & Niksch, 16th January, 2007, 'Summary'.
[20] See: Schlesinger (2005). Also, Richard Grimmett, *War Powers Resolution: Presidential Compliance*, Congressional Research Service Report (Order Code RL 33532), 16th January, 2007, pp. 1-2; Michael Foley & John E. Owens (1996), *Congress and the Presidency. Institutional Politics in a Separated System*, Manchester University Press, p. 367. The tenets of the War Powers Act, and their broader significance, are given more consideration in the next chapter.
[21] Ibid; Richard F. Grimmett, *The War Powers Resolution: After Thirty-Three Years*, Congressional Research Service Report (Order Code RL 32267), 1st May, 2007, pp. 7-8; Girling (1980), p. 6.
[22] Grimmett, 1st May, 2007, 'Summary'.

that future decisions relating to US military activity would be – as mandated by the American constitution – a joint possession of the two branches of government.[23]

Whilst the War Powers Act would ultimately do little to empower Congress to the extent that many had initially envisioned (the reasons for this are more fully discussed in the next chapter), its mere ratification signified a sea-change in how public-political America viewed the White House's dominance of military policy. With congressional investigative bodies such as the Church Commission and a 'newly emboldened media culture' monitoring, exposing, and publicly criticising America's military and intelligence behaviour like never before, an emerging 'No More Vietnams' mindset portended notable implications for the future of presidential leadership on the use of the US military.[24]

And so it would prove. The resignation of President Nixon, in August 1974, may well have closed the book on the executive branch treachery of the Vietnam era. However, the scene was set for a convention of future opposition and challenge to presidential entreaties on the need to use military force, the vigour of which simply had not existed before Vietnam.[25] The Vietnam years may not have actually dispelled Americans' willingness to view the President as the nation's 'heroic leader', but they had significant implications for the way in which Americans would respond to subsequent White House solicitations on the need to deploy US forces.[26]

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[23] Jentleson, (1997), pp. 4-42; William C. Banks & Jeffrey D. Straussman, 'A New Imperial Presidency? Insights from US Involvement in Bosnia', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114, No. 2, Summer 1999, p. 167; Grimmett, 16th January, 2007, 'Summary'.
[24] John Lewis Gaddis (1982), *Strategies of Containment*, Oxford University Press, pp.89-90, 101 & 152; Small (1996), p. 127; Klare (1982), p. 2; Neu (2000), pp. 5 & 33; Western (2005), p. 102.
[25] Appy (2006), p. 430.
[26] Roper (2000), p. 9.

The post-Vietnam backlash

America's exit from Vietnam paved the way for a new conflict back in the United States, as attempts to define responsibility and apportion blame for the endeavour unfolded in Washington.[27] The search for answers for the Vietnam debacle saw the White House blame the American media for undermining the war effort; it accused it of relinquishing its initial support for the war, of deliberately ignoring the progress made by US forces in Vietnam, and of increasingly throwing its support behind the domestic antiwar movement.[28] Congress was also broadly criticised. Opponents of the war pointed to the way in which it had initially given the White House a 'green light' to wage unchecked warfare in Vietnam and had persistently surrendered its constitutionally-mandated powers of oversight over presidential foreign policymaking. Vietnam 'hawks', on the other hand, castigated the way in which an increasingly 'radicalized' Capitol Hill had backtracked on its initial commitment to the mission and then began to cut America's commitment to South Vietnam.[29]

However it was executive stewardship of the Vietnam campaign which invited the most damning indictments. Those who had opposed the war pointed accusatory fingers at the White House for both sanctioning and sustaining the hostilities *and* for trying to stamp out domestic opposition to them. Proponents of the Vietnam endeavour – or at least those who had opposed the withdrawal of US forces from the conflict – pointed to the executive incompetence which had invited such misery and

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[27] Roper (2000), pp. 11-12.
[28] Small (1996), p. 127.
[29] Appy (2006), pp. 400-401.

humiliation upon the United States, asserting that the war was not lost on the battlefield but in the corridors of power in Washington.[30]

This view – that 'politics lost the war' – was articulated with particular stridency by much of the US military establishment. It had largely forewarned *against* involving American forces in a land war in Vietnam and had been shocked to see the degeneration of the US fighting machine, as indiscipline, disillusionment and drug abuse increasingly evidenced themselves amongst frontline American troops.[31] Stung by what young American soldiers had been exposed to in Vietnam, and angered by the White House's ultimate lack of commitment to a mission that these soldiers had died for in their tens-of-thousands, critics within the military – and also in conservative political and media circles – blamed the civilian leadership in Washington for forcing US forces to fight 'with one hand tied behind their backs'. This perception inspired many within the military to vow that they would never place US forces in such a position again.[32] In Peter Davis's Oscar-winning film *Hearts and Minds* (1975), General William Westmoreland (Commander of US Forces in Vietnam between 1964 and 1968) candidly reflected this view when he criticised Washington's civilian policymakers for stopping US forces from pushing for decisive victory in the aftermath of the 1968 Tet Offensive:

> The enemy was on the ropes after the Tet offensive was over. And it's like two boxers in the ring. One boxer has the other one on the ropes but the man who's about to be the victor has his second throw the towel in. [33]

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid, pp. 172-173 & 394-395. See also, Maclear (1981), pp. 269-271 & 279-281.
[32] Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p. 205.
[33] *Hearts and Minds*, Peter Davis (Dir.) 1975.

Whether right or wrong, Westmoreland's interpretation encapsulates what would come to form one of the dominant conservative reflections on the Vietnam failure; namely, that a lack of commitment from the civilian policymakers had plucked defeat from the jaws of an American victory.[34] Not only would this view come to colour the foreign policy perspectives of many Washington conservatives in subsequent decades; it would also steer the US military establishment's subsequent thinking on when and how to use military force. Adamant that American soldiers would never again be compromised by the fickle priorities of the civilian leadership in the White House, these attitudes would resonate in the Pentagon throughout the post-Vietnam years and would have a significant influence on the future makeup, use, and stewardship of the US military.

The Vietnam Syndrome

Given these various contentions, it is little wonder that Washington DC found itself wracked by 'rancorous foreign policy debates' throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[35] However, the divisiveness of these debates was not simply a product of Washington's efforts to apportion blame for the Vietnam failure; they also reflected legitimate Cold War concerns that America's post-Vietnam disunity had grave implications. At a time when Western confidence in American power, and a concerted will in Washington to exercise it, represented 'the cornerstone of security for the free nations' in the fight against Communism, America's post-Vietnam disunity and war-

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[34] Johnson (2004), pp. 60-61.
[35] Klare (1982), pp. 2 & 5; Balogh (2000), p. 30.

weariness raised serious questions over its ability to continue offering a credible deterrent threat to Moscow.

Given these many concerns, Washington's foreign policy deliberations in the immediate post-Vietnam period were heavily steered by two significant questions: firstly, how might the Vietnam experience inform future use-of-force policy? Secondly, how might Americans be persuaded back towards the foreign policy confidence they had felt in the years between the ending of the Second World War and the Vietnam debacle? These questions generated responses that were split roughly along the fissures of two established American ideologies – those of 'conservatives' and 'liberals'.[36] On the one hand, many American 'liberals', reflecting in no small part a wider national mood, advocated the pragmatism of a *less* interventionist post-Vietnam US foreign policy. Decrying as absurd the conservative assertion that US forces were somehow 'stopped' from winning in Vietnam, they pointed to the massive amount of armaments and chemicals dropped by US forces, and the estimated 2.5 million people who had been killed by an American-prosecuted war, as evidence that Vietnam certainly had *not* been 'lost' because civilian policymakers forced the US military to fight with 'one hand tied behind its back'.[37] Indeed, in a marked departure from the classic Wilsonian liberal tradition which depicted American engagement as being central to a more secure and democratic international order, many post-Vietnam liberals now argued that Vietnam demonstrated that the US military could not, *and should not*, be used to reshape the world in America's own image.[38] In the words of Senator Edward Kennedy, it was

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[36] Enrico Augelli & Craig Murphy (1988), *America's Quest for Supremacy and the Third World. A Gramscian Analysis*, The Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. Pinter Publishers, London, p. 70.
[37] John Pilger (1992), *Distant Voices*. London, Vintage, p. 105
[38] Western (2005), p. 101; Herring (1992), pp. 104 & 117; Balogh (2000), p. 30; Augelli & Murphy (1988), pp. 70-71; Robert W. Tucker, 'The Triumph of Wilsonianism', *World Policy Journal*, 10/4,

time for the United States to 'throw off the cumbersome mantle of world policeman'.[39]

This argument resonated with considerable swathes of conflict-weary Americans, who thought that this stance would not only save American lives but might also facilitate alternative, non-military solutions to the Cold War standoff. For example, many leading business leaders and financiers sympathetic to this viewpoint argued that Washington should target the Soviet Union's economic backwardness. They pointed out that America's considerable advantage in this area could be even further increased through greater economic co-operation with Japan and Western Europe, and through the 'co-optation of Third World elites through token concessions on North-South trade issues.'[40]

These liberal efforts to pedestal the merits of multilateral mechanisms for prevailing over Moscow, and the privileging of NATO as the vehicle through which any US militarism should now be conducted, would not last long. Global events, most notably in the Middle East, soon generated a momentum of support for a more assertive and unilateral American military presence on the world stage.[41] However, whilst this shift in opinion would eventually move many Americans towards a position of greater support for a more assertive national foreign policy, it was a shift that would take several years and one which would continue to clash with the unease that many Americans – both within and out-with government – now felt about the possibility of seeing US forces deployed to foreign conflict-zones. As Marilyn B.

1993-95, pp. 83-99; Michael Cox, Wilsonianism Resurgent? The Clinton Administration and the Promotion of Democracy', in Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry & Takashi Inoguchi, (eds.) (2000), *American Democracy Promotion. Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts*, Oxford University Press, p. 235; Alan Dobson & Steve Marsh (2006), *US Foreign Policy Since 1945*, Routledge, second edition, pp. 210-211.

[39] Klare (1982), pp. 2-3.

[40] Ibid, pp. 5-6.

[41] Klare (1982), pp. 24-25.

Young observes, a 'No More Vietnams' mindset quickly evidenced itself in the United States in the immediate post-Vietnam period and such was its palpability, that it was soon given a 'special designation' in political, media and academic circles, one which would become a domineering fixture in the lexicon of debate and commentary on post-Vietnam American foreign policymaking – the Vietnam Syndrome.[42]

If the Vietnam War divided Americans, the Syndrome it spawned was similarly divisive and it would also roughly divide Americans along traditionally ideological lines. For the many who now placed themselves under the 'liberal' banner, the Syndrome represented something positive, something which, as long as it remained both palpable *and* a discernible influence on Americans, might stop any repeat of Vietnam's mistakes. As Michael Klare observed in 1982:

> The memories of US paralysis and despair in Vietnam remain potent and thanks to the efforts of many Vietnam War veterans and former anti-war activists, very much in the public eye. So long as these memories remain alive, and the public remains sceptical about official explanations for government conduct, the Vietnam Syndrome will continue to discourage indiscriminate military interventions abroad. [43]

Individuals such as Klare clearly hoped that the Vietnam Syndrome had a degree of permanence about it so that it might continue to imbue Washington's policymakers with wisdom and caution as they deliberated the future path, and vigour, of US foreign policy. Unsurprisingly, not everyone concurred with this view.

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[42] Young (1991), p. 314.
[43] Klare (1982), p. 14.

The conservative backlash and the 'assault' on the Vietnam Syndrome

The Vietnam experience certainly did not imbue every American with a wish to see a more cautious national foreign policy. Given that they viewed prevarication and timidity as having 'lost' Vietnam in the first place, many American conservatives stridently rejected this liberal prescription. Indeed, whilst it would be 1981 before the United States saw a conservative presiding in the White House, America's right-wing was highly vocal in the aftermath of Vietnam and argued consistently that the nation's loss of face in Vietnam should spur the White House to *reassert* America's military profile on the world stage. America should, it argued, continue to crusade against 'alternative ideological systems', 'be willing to use its power and defeat its enemies' and 'not back away from conflict as it did in Vietnam'.[44]

This willingness to continue flexing America's military muscles was also allied to a clear view of precisely *how* these muscles should be flexed. Echoing the conclusion that much of the military establishment had drawn from the Vietnam experience, critics lambasted the incrementalist approaches of successive Democratic administrations in deploying US forces in both Korea and Vietnam. They argued that the Second World War showed that America's military power was most effectively unleashed if the White House sanctioned an 'overwhelming force' approach to any military endeavour. Only this approach, critics argued, would ensure US victory in the field and an end to any more 'Vietnams'.[45]

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[44] Augelli & Murphy (1988), pp. 70-71; Klare (1982), pp. 4-5; Johnson (2004), p. 60.

[45] As this study shows, however, this 'overwhelming force' mantra has been, at times, neglected by even the most staunchly conservative US administrations in an effort to keep US military involvement in foreign conflicts as minimal as possible. It has also made the White House *less* likely to deploy US forces to conflicts which did not appear to require this 'overwhelming force' approach. Author interview with former State Department official Dr William Schneider Jr., Washington DC, 10th May, 2006.

Predictably, advocates of this perspective were no less vociferous in how they viewed the Vietnam Syndrome itself. If the Syndrome made the deployment of US forces 'less viable' in the post-Vietnam period (and media, political and elite commentators were asserting just that at this point), then conservatives regarded it as nothing less than a dangerous impediment to America's Cold War mission and global role.[46] They thus took the view through the 1970s and 1980s that even *public reference* to the Vietnam Syndrome was troubling evidence that this national affliction was still prevalent. As long as it remained in the collective conscience of Americans, they feared, it would continue to invoke the Vietnam experience and thus continue to sway Americans against what remained the cornerstone of America's ability to prevail over the Soviet Union – a bold willingness to project military power.

Thus, amidst all of the other debates in Washington, the immediate post-Vietnam period saw Washington conservatives launch 'a vigorous and unceasing campaign to "cure" America of the Vietnam Syndrome', as part of their efforts to revive military intervention as a key foreign policy option which might be broadly supported by Americans. These 'anti-Syndrome forces' would have a significant impact on presidential foreign policymaking until at least the end of the Cold War.[47]

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[46] Richard E. Feinberg (1983), *The Intemperate Zone. The Third World Challenge to US Foreign Policy*, W. W. Norton, New York & London, p. 35.
[47] Klare (1982), pp. 1-2.

The White House and the Vietnam Syndrome

Even as America's Vietnam debates continued apace in political, media and academic circles, it was clear that one thing certainly had *not* changed for the post-Vietnam White House. The Cold War was still very much on and there was still a pressing need to maintain Americans' readiness for military action against any perceived Communist threat. Thus, perhaps inevitably, the White House also weighed into America's debates over the Vietnam Syndrome.

The White House's engagement with the Vietnam Syndrome would become a significant characteristic of the post-Vietnam presidency, until at least the end of the Cold War. It would see every President in office in the two decades following Vietnam take it upon himself to publicly renounce the Syndrome at some point. The White House 'assault' on the Vietnam Syndrome really gathered momentum in 1981, with the election of Ronald Reagan. However, if Reagan would come to represent the embodiment of White House anti-Syndrome conservatism, it was perhaps his predecessor, the Democrat Jimmy Carter, who established a benchmark and set the parameters for the Reagan presidency. The next section of this chapter details, in brief, the key foreign policy events of the Carter presidency and America's response to how he dealt with them. This response manifested itself in gradually-increasing support for a more vigorous foreign policy stance from the White House and, ultimately, the election of a Commander-in-Chief whose mission it would be to eradicate the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all.

The Carter foreign policy and the Vietnam Syndrome

Jimmy Carter was US President from 1977 until 1981, when Washington's debates over the Vietnam Syndrome were at their height.[48] Carter's foreign policy very much reflected the 'liberal' consensus on Vietnam. Consequently, for most of his presidency, he found himself criticised by conservatives as being a hostage to the worst excesses of the Vietnam Syndrome, as he vetoed direct US involvement in conflicts in Zaire, Angola, Iran and Nicaragua. Carter's non-interventionism would gradually act as a catalyst to rally elite and corporate support behind conservatives' calls for a more forceful US foreign policy. Whilst he did eventually yield to these calls, he did so too late, and with insufficient conviction, to win a second term in office. Carter's 'performance' as President would pave the way for 12 years of conservative Republican presidential leadership.[49]

Accusations of Carter's foreign policy timidity emerged in the aftermath of Portugal's military defeat and hurried exit from Angola, in November of 1975. For many in Washington, there were many reasons why the United States should involve itself in Angola after its wars of independence (1961-1975) against the Portuguese. Not the least of these was the fact that one of the principal protagonists in this unstable, war-torn environment – the Marxist *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) – was receiving signficant backing from both Moscow and Havana. In the aftermath of Portugal's rout, the MPLA 'assumed hegemony' over Angola and held the capital, Luanda. Wary of this situation, the concerns of many Western Cold War warriors were then bolstered when MPLA numbers were supplemented by Cuban military reinforcements; by February of 1976, around 12,000 Cuban troops had

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[48] Roper (2000), p. 131.
[49] Klare (1982), pp. 2-4; Roper (2000), p. 128.

been deployed to Angola.[50] However, despite fears that Moscow was now able to control important sea-lanes off the South African coast, and that it might use its military foothold in Angola as a staging post for possible intervention in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, Carter chose (albeit under constraints from a concerned Congress) to remain largely disengaged from Angola. It was a decision which invited significant criticism from many quarters in Washington.[51]

However, it was Carter's handling of the Iranian Revolution of 1978-1979 which shifted much of Washington's policymaking elite over to the position espoused by an ascendant right-wing.[52] Carter ignored the wishes of some of his key administration figures by refusing to use the US military to protect the Shah during the Revolution and maintain stability within Iran. Critics quickly seized upon this decision as an example of Carter's foreign policy timidity *and* of his lack of strategic judgement. It was, they asserted, a critical mistake which risked undermining one of America's key Middle Eastern allies. These concerns appeared to be realised when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini seized power in Tehran, on 11th February 1979.[53] Accused by domestic opponents of 'abandoning the Shah to his enemies', domestic criticism of Carter escalated still further after the US Embassy in Tehran was stormed by Iranian 'students', on 4th November. Carter ordered a Special Forces mission to rescue the 52 American hostages held by the students. However this operation failed, further fuelling America's 'hysterical response' to the crisis and leaving the President facing accusations that he had 'lost Iran'.[54]

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[50] Keith Somerville, 'The USSR and Southern Africa Since 1976', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1984, p. 77; George Wright (1997), *The Destruction of a Nation. United States' Policy Towards Angola since 1945*, Pluto Press, p. 65.
[51] Somerville (1984), p. 76; Klare (1982), p. 4; Dobson & Marsh (2006), p. 46.
[52] Klare (1982), p. 8; Johnson (2004), p. 60.
[53] Information available on the BBC website (accessed 14th May 2008) at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/1/newsid_2521000/2521003.stm
[54] Gardner & Young (eds.) (2007), p. 8; Roper (2000), p. 131; Wright (1997), p. 98. See also: Abbas Milani (2000), *The Persian Sphinx: Amir Abbas Hoveyda and the Riddle of the Iranian Revolution*,

Carter's handling of the Iranian crisis seemed to galvanise a growing consensus amongst Americans that the nation's post-Vietnam diffidence had gone far enough. In admonishing the Carter administration's poor showing on foreign policy, *Newsweek* castigated it for 'the interventions it will not contemplate, bases it will not seek, weapons it will not build'. *Business Week* lamented the 'perception of paralysis' in the Carter White House and warned that the Vietnam experience was continuing to restrain the Carter administration from protecting America and American interests: 'The policies set in motion during the Vietnam War are now threatening the way of life built since World War II', it warned.[55]

Commentaries such as these may sometimes have been written by Republican-leaning observers who had little intention of offering an impartial appraisal of the Carter presidency. However, it was opinions of this nature – always reminding Americans of the continuing need to address the Soviet threat – which captured much public-political attention in America during the latter period of the Carter presidency. Indeed, 'militant globalist' groups in Washington such as the *Committee on the Present Danger*, headed by the hawkish political strategist Paul Nitze, were being quoted in the media 'as regularly as the White House itself' during this period. Further criticism from hardliners such as Nitze (ironically, a former political ally of Carter's) would be levelled at Carter when he signed the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) with the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, in June 1979.[56]

Mage Publishing; Babak Ganji (2006), *The Politics of Confrontation: The Foreign Policy of the USA and Revolutionary Iran*, Taurus Academic Studies, New York.

[55] George F. Will, 'No More 'No More Vietnams'', *Newsweek*, 19th March, 1979; *Business Week*, 'The Decline of US Power', 12th March, 1979; See also, Klare (1982), pp. 4 & 8.

[56] Ibid, p. 7; Wright (1997), p. 78. *The Committee on the Present Danger* remains a bipartisan organisation 'concerned about strategic drift in US security policy'. See the organisation's declaration on its own website (accessed 14th January 2008) at: http://www.committeeonthepresentdanger.org/AboutUs/History/tabid/382/Default.aspx. On Nitze's criticisms, see Fred Kaplan, 'The Man Who Brought us the Cold War', *Slate*, 21st October, 2004. Available at: http://www.slate.com/id/2108510

With a growing momentum of elite disgruntlement with, and negative media coverage of, Carter's foreign policy, it seemed that America was shifting slowly to the right. And by mid-1979, it seemed that Carter was responding to that shift. Amidst growing concerns in Washington that ongoing Middle-East turbulence could spark a domestic energy crisis, and opinion polls appearing to confirm a bolder public mood, Carter demonstrated a willingness to adopt some of the 'Cold-War militarist policies' being advocated by the increasingly-vocal right.[57] He announced plans for a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) tasked with counter-insurgency warfare, and a significant expansion of America's naval presence in the Persian Gulf.

This vigour was timely, to say the least. In December of 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, leaving Carter with the responsibility of offering an appropriately strong response to Moscow's incursion.[58] If this response was viewed domestically as a measure of how far this seemingly conflict-averse Democratic administration had now shrugged off the Vietnam Syndrome, Carter's announcement – that he was prepared to use military force to protect American Persian Gulf oil supplies, and that he would consult Congress on authorizing registration of the draft – was broadly viewed as evidence that it *had* indeed shrugged off Vietnam's chains. In fact, one Carter official publicly declared just that, stating that the President's strident response had 'put and end to the Vietnam Syndrome'.[59] The announcement of the Carter Doctrine – which stated that any effort to wrest control of the Persian Gulf region would be treated as a direct attack on America' interests – appeared to reiterate this strident new position.[60]

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[57] Wright (1997), pp. 90 & 98; Klare (1982), pp. 8-9.
[58] See, Alan Dobson (2002), *US Economic Statecraft for Survival, 1933-1991: Of Sanctions, Embargoes and Economic Warfare*, Routledge, London, pp. 251-262.
[59] Comment in the *New York Times*, 2nd December 1979, cited in Klare (1982), p. 10. See also pp. 24, 26 & 27 in Klare.
[60] Dobson & Marsh (2006), p. 46.

However, if President Carter *had* finally shrugged off the Vietnam Syndrome and come round to a more interventionist position, then it was too little too late for his presidency. In November 1980, Americans rejected Carter and voted the hawkish Republican Ronald Reagan into office as the 40th President of the United States. For the time-being at least, it seemed that the conservative anti-Vietnam Syndrome forces in Washington were winning the post-Vietnam battle, both for America's votes *and* for its foreign policy.

Ronald Reagan enters the White House; the presidential 'assault' on the Vietnam Syndrome begins in earnest

Carter's election defeat might be viewed as an instructive benchmark as to what Americans expected of their country as it entered the 1980s. The Vietnam Syndrome still assumed a fixture-like presence in the American collective consciousness at this point. However, Reagan's election victory suggested that many Americans were dissatisfied at seeing the White House demonstrate too much of the timidity the Syndrome represented. A Republican hardliner, there certainly seemed little chance that the new President – and the 'rugged Reaganauts' who peopled his foreign policy team – would succumb to this timidity.[61] As one Reagan official explained:

> When we came into office, one of our primary missions was to get Americans out of the 'Vietnam Syndrome', and get them accustomed again to the idea that projecting power overseas can help the cause of peace. [62]

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[61] Gardner & Young (2007), p. 9.
[62] Steven R. Weisman, 'Reagan Rides the Crest of an Anti-Soviet Wave', *New York Times*, 25th September, 1983; Holsti & Rosenau (1984), p. 229.

Reagan's public rhetoric vividly reflected this 'mission'. Expansively revisionist, he publicly recast the Vietnam War as a 'noble cause', describing it as having been a 'sanctified noble crusade'. He also pointed to a changing national mood as unmistakeable evidence that the Vietnam Syndrome had been 'swept away'.[63] However, Reagan's efforts to exorcise Vietnam's demons found form in more than just buoyant public diplomacy. He also sought to implement a bold foreign policy. In doing so however, he ensured that – contrary to his wishes – the Vietnam Syndrome remained very much at the forefront of America's thinking.

For all his self-declared ability to engage with the national mood, Reagan may well have over-estimated the extent to which America's electoral endorsement of him signified its willingness to embrace a more interventionist position. Americans may well have rejected a 'wimpish' Carter; however, this did *not* mean that they were ready to offer blind support for Reagan's bullish plans for winning the Cold War. For example, his commitment to aid the El Salvadoran government in its domestic fight against Marxist guerrillas – Reagan provided military advisors and financial assistance to the junta – proved hugely unpopular with Americans; it generated considerable unrest on Capitol Hill, strident media criticism and, on 3rd May 1981 (just 4 months into his office), Washington's largest anti-war march since Vietnam. Despite his mission to eradicate any mention of Vietnam from the national vernacular, the subject quickly came to dominate America's debates over El Salvador. Critics made ready physical comparisons between Vietnam and El Salvador's own heavily-jungled terrain *and* between Reagan's 'assistance' to San Salvador and that which had drawn the US into Vietnam in the first place. Media critics openly questioned

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[63] Steven R. Weisman, 'Reagan Rides the Crest of an Anti-Soviet Wave', *New York Times*, 25th September, 1983; Ted Gest, 'Foreign Policy: The Main Area', *US News & World Report*, November 3, 1980, p. 62; Gardner & Young (2007), pp. 8-9; Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey Berry & Jerry Goldman (2008), *The Challenge of Democracy. Government in America*, Houghton Mifflin: Boston, New York, 9th edition, p. 632.

whether the United States might ultimately find itself 'being sucked into a repetition of the Vietnam War in its own back yard'.[64] Reagan protested such suggestions and publicly criticised his detractors of still suffering from the Vietnam Syndrome.[65]

Whilst he was not shy of taking on his critics, Reagan was thus left in no doubt that his much-promoted 'peace through strength' foreign policy vision faced considerable domestic opposition. Not only was his foreign policy approach decried by his opponents as a reincarnation of the 'Imperial Presidency' so denounced during the Vietnam years; his emboldening influence on the national mood simply *had not* eradicated the conflict-shy, casualty-averse sensitivities which still seemed to grip significant sections of the American polity.

It was this continuing domestic deployment-aversion which played a large part in steering what has become one of the central missions, and the most glaring characteristics, of post-Vietnam American foreign policymaking. In his efforts to ease Americans towards a position where they would be more likely to support the projection of US military power across the globe, Reagan did more than just try to *persuade* Americans that the Vietnam Syndrome was behind them. He also turned his attention towards the Pentagon in order to promote what subsequently become known as the *Revolution in Military Affairs*.[66]

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[64] 'Why the Talk of Another Vietnam?' *US News & World Report*, 9th March, 1981, p. 9; Hedrick Smith, 'The National Mood', *The New York Times*, 29th May, 1981; Small (1996), p.141; Janda, Berry & Goldman (2008), p. 632; Klare (1982), pp. 96-97.

[65] Klare (1982), p. 96; James Reston, 'Washington; Reagan's Failing Tactics'. *New York Times*, 16th March, 1982.

[66] See Edward Luttwak, 'Towards Post-Heroic Warfare', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 3, May-June 1995; Stephen Biddle, 'Assessing Theories of Future Warfare', in Brands (ed.) (2000), chapter 11; Michael Howard (2001), *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and International Order*, Profile Books; Paul Hirst (2001), *War and Power in the 21st Century*, Polity Press; Michael Ignatieff (2001), *Virtual War. Kosovo and Beyond*, Vintage Publishing.

The post-Vietnam quest to fail-safe US military operations

Spurred by its failure to make its military superiority count in Vietnam, but mindful that America's Vietnam casualty-count continued to sway many Americans against supporting force deployments, the development of new conventional military technologies became a driving concern for America's political-military establishment in the decade after Vietnam. The imperative to develop these technologies was driven by rather obvious rationales. Firstly, unlike the vast numbers of nuclear weapons held by Washington and Moscow, they could be readily used.[67] Secondly, and just as importantly, they also suggested the possibility of reducing dependence on that most vulnerable, and politically precious, military resource – troops.[68] Faced with the panacean possibility of risk-free military operations in the future, the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) thus appeared to represent an irresistible opportunity for Washington's foreign policymaking establishment, both in its efforts to establish an American-policed world order and also, importantly, in its efforts to re-inspire Americans' support for this endeavour.[69]

Unsurprisingly, Reagan was a willing RMA sponsor. Shortly after taking office, he sanctioned an extra $33 billion to the Pentagon's annual spending budget. It was a commitment which would help the United States to develop an unassailable technological advantage over the Soviet Union through the 1980s.[70] Whilst Reagan's 'Star Wars' programme grabbed much public attention, the RMA would ultimately see fruition in the emergence of cruise missiles, satellite positioning systems,

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[67] Ignatieff (2001), p. 164.
[68] Hirst (2001), pp. 88-91.
[69] Eliot A. Cohen, 'The Mystique of US Air Power', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 1, January/February 1994, p. 111; Hirst (2001), p. 88.
[70] Neu (ed.) (2000), p. 21; Ignatieff (2001), pp. 164, 165 & 167; Cohen (1994), pp. 109-110.

remotely piloted vehicles and 'stealth' technologies.[71] However, if the realization of these weapons reflected a broadly-held confidence in Washington that technology could facilitate military operations absent the various harms and debilitations which had been so prevalent during the Vietnam War, the Vietnam Syndrome continued to preclude consensus, even on this issue. Scepticism over the efficacy of the RMA quickly evidenced itself. Surprisingly, perhaps, it emanated from a quarter of American government which was indispensable to the conceptualising and execution of American foreign policy – the US military itself.

With the post-Vietnam hangover still palpable within the Pentagon, much of the US military hierarchy viewed the RMA with a discerning scepticism. Institutionally conservative, it embraced the new technologies on the condition that they entailed no loss of personnel, structures and traditions. The most guarded response of all the military branches came from the Army, which struggled to see past the possibility that its divisions of tanks, artillery pieces and troops faced redundancy, along with the 'warrior ethos' which was so central to its culture. Notwithstanding these concerns, enthusiastic solicitations that new weapons technologies could dispel the fog and friction of war sounded suspiciously like what many senior soldiers had heard from their civilian masters in the build-up to, and during, the Vietnam War itself. Many military sceptics wondered whether these new technologies really would eradicate the compromises and mistakes which had proven so costly in Vietnam.[72]

These scepticisms were nourished by America's very first major post-Vietnam military operation, when President Reagan deployed US Marines to the conflict in Lebanon, in August of 1982 (see chapter 4). Despite their ostensibly neutral presence in this conflict, US troops soon found themselves drawn into Beirut's fighting and 241

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[71] Ignatieff (2001), pp. 162 &167; Hirst (2001), p. 91.
[72] Ignatieff (2001), p. 91. See also: David Halberstam (2001), *Bush, Clinton and the Generals*, Bloomsbury, pp. 50-56; Bacevich (2005), p. 172.

American Marines were killed in a targeted bombing in the city, on October 23rd 1982.[73] A serious blow to both his Lebanon policy *and* his efforts to help Americans put the Vietnam experience behind them, Reagan found to his cost that the Pentagon's emerging monopoly on weapons technologies had not altered two longstanding axioms of warfare: firstly, that clarity of aim, astute strategising and skilled leadership are minimum requirements for victory in the field; secondly, that military success is typically dependent upon a military resource which has remained largely unchanged for generations – well-trained infantry who are able to win the battle on the ground. If the Marines in Lebanon more than met the latter requirement, ill-defined deployment goals, stumbling mission parameters and Reagan's ultimate lack of commitment to the mission compromised an endeavour which the Pentagon had vigorously opposed from the start.

Reagan may well have thought that a nation-lifting victory would cast away the shadows of the Vietnam Syndrome. However, the tragic finale to the Lebanon deployment saw Americans once again watch their soldiers withdrawn from theatre, bloodied and defeated by a supposedly inferior enemy.[74] A much-vaunted success in overthrowing the 'virulently anti-American' Marxist government in Grenada, just a few days later, did little to convince America's many conflict-doubters that the use of military force – even with America's superior military means – was likely to bring success at acceptable costs.[75] The military chiefs quickly came to view the Lebanon

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[73] Caspar Weinberger (1990), *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon*, New York: Warner Books, p.151; John H. Kelly (1996), 'Lebanon 1982-1984', in J. R. Azrael & E. A. Payin (eds.) (1996), *U.S and Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force*, Rand Institution Publications, chapter 6.

[74] Gardner & Young (2007), pp. 8-9.

[75] Howard Raines, 'Reagan Vows US Will Press Efforts To Build Defenses', *New York Times*, 28th May, 1981; Hedrick Smith, 'The National Mood', *The New York Times*, 29th May, 1981; Fred Halliday, 'The Reagan Administration and the Middle East', *Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Autumn 1984, p. 220; Klare (1982), p. 2; George Ball, 'American in the Middle East: A Breakdown in Foreign Policy', *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Spring, 1984, p. 14; Young (1991), pp. 314-315; Robert

experience as something of a 'mini-Vietnam lesson'; in the coming years, they would continue to make sure that this experience was not forgotten as they counselled civilian policymakers on the use of US forces.[76]

Determined that the Lebanon setback would not be repeated, President Reagan's Secretary of Defence, Caspar Weinberger, attempted to enshrine the military's intervention-concerns when he announced the Weinberger Doctrine, in 1984. Drawing upon one of the key conservative 'lessons' of Vietnam – that US military interventions must be executed in a manner, and on a scale, 'sufficient to win' – the Weinberger Doctrine was a policy statement detailing six prerequisites that should be met before US forces should be deployed.[77] It stated that: any proposed US intervention should be 'vital' to America's interests; that deployment should be willingly undertaken; that intervention should be aimed at attaining unambiguous military and political objectives; that force of arms was clearly the answer to achieving these objectives; that domestic (particularly congressional) support for intervention was attained; and that combat should be a last resort.[78] However whilst Weinberger's efforts to 'straight-jacket' America's military interventions would be further honed within the next decade, these 'intervention rules' would ultimately do little to guide presidential deployment decisions – they were often too rigid, too inapplicable or were simply a hindrance to the wishes of a particular Commander-in-Chief. Whatever the value or usage of these 'rules', deficiencies and mistakes would

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C. DiPrizio (2002), *Armed Humanitarians. US Interventions from Northern Iraq to Kosovo*, Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 1-2; Jeffrey Record (2002), *Making War, Thinking History. Munich, Vietnam and Presidential Uses of Force from Korea to Kosovo*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, pp. 86-88.

[76] Record (2002), p. 86.

[77] Holsti & Rosenau (1984), p. 15.

[78] Caspar Weinberger, 'The Uses of Military Power'; Remarks to the National Press Club, Washington DC, 28th November 1984. Speech available (accessed 3rd August 2007) at the *Frontline America* section of the PBS website: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/force/weinberger.html. Also, Record (2002), pp. 27-28.

continue to evidence themselves in executive branch deployment decision-making in succeeding years.[79]

There can be little argument that President Reagan – the undisputed champion of the anti-Syndrome forces during the late 1970s and 1980s – was largely unsuccessful in his task to rid America of the Vietnam Syndrome. Spurred by Reagan's interest in El Salvador and also by the ill-fated Lebanon mission, Martin Staniland observes that America continued its 'obsessive' preoccupation with Vietnam throughout his first term in office. Its responses to the various international conflicts of this period were, he notes, characterised by an immediate buzzing of Vietnam 'radars' in Washington and a near-paranoid search for 'Vietnamness' on the part of much of the political and media establishment, so that disengagement from the conflict in question might be justified.[80] Elite commentators would continue to note the 'surprising persistence' of the Vietnam Syndrome throughout the 1980s, whilst political journalists acknowledged the Syndrome as 'an identifiable political force' in Washington DC politics.[81]

This changed little through the passage of Reagan's second term in office. He and his administration were all too aware of their failure to rid America of the Vietnam Syndrome. 'Our failure in Vietnam still casts a shadow over U.S. intervention anywhere', an administration report warned at the end of Reagan's second term, a clear admission that – despite its best efforts – the Vietnam experience continued to infuse America's collective consciousness.[82] It would be left to

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[79] Record (2002), p. 2.
[80] Staniland (1984), p. 597.
[81] Feinberg (1983), p. 188; Philip Geyelin, 'A Desert Doesn't Look Like a Quagmire', *Washington Post,* 14th August 1983; Balogh (2000), p. 28.
[82] *Discriminate Deterrence*; Report of the Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy, January 1998, cited in Young (1991), pp. 316 & 372 (at endnote 31).

Reagan's successor to pick up the torch and to try, once more, to eradicate the Vietnam Syndrome.

The post-Cold War era; a fragmenting world order and a rejuvenated Vietnam Syndrome

The White House 'assault' on the Vietnam Syndrome certainly did not end with Reagan's exit from office. He was succeeded in the Oval Office by the man who had been his vice-President; George H. W. Bush. Bush carried his predecessor's anti-Syndrome verve into office with him when he won the presidency in 1989.[83] However, for all his own efforts to move Americans beyond the Vietnam Syndrome during the uncertainties of the immediate post-Cold War period, the Syndrome persisted, much as it had done throughout the Reagan years.

Despite the fact that many Americans continued to demonstrate a 'grave reluctance to send American troops abroad', Bush mirrored his predecessor in deploying US forces to the Middle East, this time in response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Unlike the limited Lebanon deployment, however, Bush's deployment was massive and on a scale which had not been seen since the Vietnam War.[84] Like his predecessor, President Bush found himself having to 'fight' the Vietnam Syndrome as he sought to rally domestic support behind the Persian Gulf deployment. Amidst political and media accusations that he was sending US troops into a desert quagmire, and that he was acting with all the unaccountability demonstrated by the Vietnam Presidents, Bush arguably found it easier to amass a strong international

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[83] Gardner & Young (2007), pp. 8-9.
[84] Young (1991), p. 314.

military coalition to stand against Iraq's aggression, than he did to win the domestic battle at home (see chapter 5).

Despite his efforts to dispel Vietnam's shadows during this time, it is clear that the Bush White House *was* extremely mindful of the Vietnam Syndrome. Whilst America's Vietnam concerns were not sufficient to *stop* him from deploying US forces into combat against Iraqi forces, Bush's stipulations for the deployment had the Vietnam Syndrome etched all over it – *Operation Desert Storm* was planned with a near-obsession with mission-brevity, casualty-avoidance and the need for international legitimacy. Whilst the success of this US-led operation in 'liberating Kuwait' may well have dispelled Vietnam's shadows from the American consciousness, Bush's triumphant declaration in the aftermath of victory in the Persian Gulf – that America had 'kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all' – ultimately proved (as had similar declarations from his predecessor) to be a premature affirmation of the Syndrome's demise.[85] Ironically, within just a year or so, Bush himself would breathe new life into it.

Its public renunciation by President Bush in early 1991 had little effect in eradicating the Vietnam Syndrome. In fact, the Syndrome continued to evidence itself over the next decade as an unfolding succession of ethnic conflicts (in Somalia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Rwanda) sparked a whole new series of use-of-force debates – and deployment concerns – in the United States. Whilst many Americans remained stubbornly resistant to seeing US forces deployed to foreign conflicts, the end of the Cold War saw many others reflect a growing international consensus that 'human rights protection and democracy promotion' were the 'new imperatives in world politics'. For the many Americans who appeared to be sympathetic to this view,

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[85] E. J. Dionne, 'Kicking the "Vietnam Syndrome"; Victory Sweeps Away U.S. Doomed-to-Failure Feeling', *The Washington Post*, 4th March, 1991.

'humanitarian' military intervention was now an acceptable – and, to the world's sole remaining superpower – an achievable vehicle for upholding 'universal civic values'.[86] Dissatisfied at seeing the White House remain inactive in the face of the civilian disasters spawned by such conflicts, and absent the threat of military retaliation from Moscow, 'liberals' and 'hardliners' often made unlikely bedfellows in demanding US military intervention – if not to actually curb the hostilities, then at least to alleviate the humanitarian crises they spawned.[87]

These arguments were often compelling but the White House perspective was frequently at odds with liberal interventionist demands. Wary of sending US troops into open-ended operations in the middle of heated battle-zones, administration deliberations over how to act towards these crises consistently appeared to have Vietnam's shadows hovering over them. Absent any Cold War imperatives, or any glaring resource or strategic significance, Presidents – backed vigorously by the Pentagon – typically viewed these conflicts as being both devoid of American 'interests' *and* as chaotic killing fields which promised little political capital for any would-be interventionist President.[88]

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[86] Väyrynen (1999), p. 174; Jens Stilhoff Sörensen, 'Balkanism and the New Radical Interventionism: A Structural Critique', *International Peacekeeping,* vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 2002, p. 2.
[87] Western (2005), p. 222.
[88] The Editors, 'American Realism and the real world', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 29, 2003, p. 402.

The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine and the decade of humanitarian emergencies

Central to this White House deployment-reluctance was the fact that possible engagement with the ethnic conflicts of the post-Cold War period little satisfied the 'overwhelming force' mindset which had, albeit inconsistently, largely embedded itself in the collective consciousness of Washington's political-military establishment since Lebanon. Successful US interventions in Grenada (1983) and Kuwait (1991) had affirmed for much of this establishment that political ends *could* be successfully achieved through force but only if used *overwhelmingly* and if operations were largely US-controlled. However, it was clear that if the US *was* to respond to the wave of conflicts which emerged in the post-Gulf War period, then these conditions were unlikely to be met. Possible Western involvement in these crises was always predicated upon the assumption that that involvement would be: a) multilateral; b) subject to restricted rules of engagement, and c) under co-operative military command, most probably through the United Nations (UN).

For many in Washington, these conditions held little appeal. Firstly, the possibility of seeing US troops involved in multilateral peacekeeping and humanitarian operations sparked longstanding concerns that external actors should not usurp the President's constitutionally-enshrined role as Commander-in-Chief of US forces. Secondly, this feeling was *especially* marked if that 'external actor' was the United Nations; a near-institutional aversion – especially amongst conservatives – to seeing US forces operating under the UN was palpable in Washington throughout much of the 1990s. Thirdly, the Lebanon experience had galvanised the perception amongst many political, military and media figures in Washington that US forces faced fruitless risks in assuming non-aggressive interpositional roles bound by

restrictive 'political' rules-of-engagement. Fourthly, inter-operability problems with technologically inferior military allies appeared to presage that in such operations, US forces not only risked being compromised in the field but that they would also have to shoulder the bulk of the burden in any operation, in order to secure mission integrity, safety and effectiveness.

Given these considerations, it is perhaps unsurprising that many in Washington – on both sides of the political divide – were unsupportive of US military involvement in these crises. 'From the political perspective', one former State Department official has subsequently admitted, these considerations and concerns 'had a big impact' on White House deployment decisions during the 1990s and they may go a long way towards explaining America's reluctant involvement in the conflicts of this period.[89]

One aspect of the White House's efforts to grapple with these new intervention dilemmas was to further sharpen its intervention guidelines. The Weinberger Doctrine had been constructed to offer prudent intervention guidelines to the Cold War White House but General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, refined Weinberger's 'rules' in 1992. Powell specified that force deployments should only be sanctioned with the absolute commitment of the White House and should employ overwhelming force, a stipulation which reflected Powell's disdain for the idea that US forces might be used incrementally or, even worse, as a symbol of 'American power'.

Against the backdrop of the liberal interventionist mood which appeared to be taking hold of some sections of post-Cold War America, the Weinberger-Powell

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[89] Author interview with former State Department official Dr William Schneider Jr., Washington DC, 10th May, 2006

Doctrine (WP Doctrine) was quickly lambasted by some critics as representing a 'no-can-do' attitude on the part of a military establishment which, since Vietnam, had demonstrated a consistent reluctance to engage in anything less than a full-scale war. There may well have been some legitimacy in this accusation; Powell's mindset did indeed have the Vietnam experience stamped all over it. However, the WP Doctrine was also informed by the Lebanon experience and vividly reflected the military's belief that if civilian policymakers really did see fit to deploy, then they should honour this commitment by bringing the full weight of American military power to bear so that debacles of the type witnessed in Beirut could be avoided.[90]

Whatever the wisdom of, of the rationales for, these 'intervention rules', the WP Doctrine inspired little more presidential fidelity to their prescriptions than had the Weinberger Doctrine. General Powell's concerns may well have made sound military sense but these concerns were not always compatible with those of his Commander-in-Chief, who was clearly subject to a far broader array of public-political pressures than any military practitioner. The passage of the 1990s consistently proved this. With Western media coverage keeping ongoing crises in Somalia and Bosnia very much in the public limelight, and with American inaction on these crises often appearing negligent when compared to the actions taken by other national governments, the White House came to realise that – despite the reservations of senior political and military policymakers – military non-engagement was not always a feasible political option.

However, President Bush's decision to deploy US forces to Somalia in December of 1992 proved once more – as had been the case for President Reagan

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[90] Feaver & Gelpi (2004), p. 26; DiPrizio (2002), pp. 3-4; John P. Murtha (2006), *From Vietnam to 9/11. On the Front Lines of National Security*, Penn State University Press, second paperback edition pp. 188-190.

with the Lebanese War twenty years earlier – that military operations held grave risks, even for the world's most advanced military power. As in Lebanon, it would be the dubiety of civilian policymakers' decisions and commitment, rather than the deficiencies of the US military or its arsenal, which would bring America's mission to a bloody end. Initially deployed to safeguard humanitarian aid deliveries, Bush's successor Bill Clinton (apparently joining his predecessor in ignoring the prerequisites enshrined in the WP Doctrine) escalated America's role in Somalia. It was a decision which ultimately resulted in the now-infamous Mogadishu fire-fight, in October of 1993. The confrontation ended with 18 US troops being killed, with a further 84 wounded.[91] The incident set Vietnam 'radars' buzzing with renewed vigour in Washington; it did not take political and media critics long to start referring to Somalia as 'Vietmalia'. President Clinton promptly withdrew US forces.[92]

The ignominious ending to America's involvement in Somalia, and the predictably sensational response to it from within the American public-political arena, ultimately spurred the Clinton administration to rein in its brief support for US involvement in multilateral humanitarian operations. Clinton's review of such operations was enshrined in Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25), a directive which Trevor McCrisken describes as 'a further codification of the Vietnam Syndrome'.[93] For much of the drawing up of this directive, Clinton officials had articulated considerable support for US involvement in multilateral humanitarian operations – early on in the review process, proposals were even forwarded for the creation of a standing UN 'peacekeeping' army. However in the light of the Mogadishu fracas, and administration concerns that Congress and the American

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[91] See the *PBS* website, 'Ambush in Mogadishu'. Accessed 3rd January 2008 at PBS website: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ambush/
[92] Power (2002), p. 317.
[93] McCrisken (2003), p. 165.

public would now vigorously oppose any such missions in the future, PDD-25 was drastically re-evaluated and its unveiling detailed a considerable retreat from its early liberal-interventionist ethos.[94] Once more, America's post-Vietnam military casualty-aversions appeared to be influencing the path and the vigour of US foreign policy.

An irrelevant military advantage?

The doomed Somalia mission very much re-invigorated the Vietnam Syndrome. Indeed, after Mogadishu, it seemed that the Clinton administration was suffering from the Syndrome as badly as its most deployment-averse critics (see chapter 6). The Mogadishu setback re-ignited Washington's debates over the abilities and responsibilities of the world's sole remaining superpower. There were numerous viewpoints. For some, the US failure in Somalia proved that an RMA-obsessed Pentagon had 'failed to develop concepts relevant to the new realities' of the post-Cold War world. Others speculated that Washington had learnt nothing at all from the Vietnam experience: the US may now have an abundance of aircraft carriers, stealth aircraft and satellite-guided missiles at its disposal, critics argued; however Mogadishu, and ongoing White House timidity over US involvement in Bosnia, demonstrated that this futuristic arsenal, and its *modus operandi*, was a 'poor fit' with the low intensity conflicts which now appeared to be the dominant threat to international peace. Nor had America's supposed 'military advantage' increased its proficiency, or confidence, in what remained the most crucial arena of warfare –

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[94] Sarah B. Sewall, 'Multilateral Peace Operations' in Stewart Patrick & Shepard Forman (eds.) (2002), *Multilateralism and US Foreign Policy. Ambivalent Engagement*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 196-198; Dobson & Marsh (2006), p. 14.

fighting on the ground.[95] Other commentators argued that the Mogadishu debacle did *not* prove that America's military was actually *ineffectual* in 'small war settings'; it merely showed that US forces had to be utilised with greater proficiency.[96] As far as America's military chiefs were concerned, *all* of these perspectives missed the point: US forces *were* sufficiently able to accomplish *any* task set for them, they argued; however, there were clear intervention guidelines enshrined in the WP Doctrine and these guidelines emphasised *full* and *decisive* applications of military force, *not* cautious 'gesture' deployments constrained by the political motivations of civilian policymakers. However, other Americans utterly opposed any US involvement in these conflicts whatsoever, *regardless* the reasons for, and vigour of, the deployment.

After Somalia, these divergent perspectives were stridently touted as 'hawks' and 'doves' contested the pros and cons of military engagement with the Bosnian War, which had sprung to international prominence in 1992. They perhaps manifested themselves most prominently in a notorious altercation between a hawkish Madeleine Albright – who was then President Clinton's Ambassador to the United Nations – and General Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Citing both fuzzy policy objectives *and* a lack of mission clarity from the Clinton administration, Powell vigorously opposed placing US forces in the firing-line between Bosnia's three warring factions, a stance which prompted Albright to challenge him: 'What's the point in having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?' Powell (who later admitted that he thought he would 'have an aneurysm' over this question) reacted with fury, affronted that Albright seemed to

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[95] Henry Kissinger (2001), Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Towards a Diplomacy for the 21st Century, Simon & Schuster, p. 19; Halberstam (2001), p. 87. See also Jonathan Clarke, 'The Conceptual Poverty of US Foreign Policy', *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1993; DiPrizio (2002), chapter 3; Max Boot (2002), *The Savage Wars of Peace. Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, Basic Books, pp. 330-331; Murtha (2006), chapter 8.

[96] Boot (2002), pp. xix & 331.

view American troops as 'toy soldiers' who could be readily used in 'some sort of global board game'.[97]

Thus, whilst they were referred to as 'teacup wars' by some analysts, the post-Cold War ethnic conflicts nonetheless posed challenging questions, and difficult political problems, for the White House.[98] They also guaranteed the longevity of the Vietnam Syndrome by ensuring that deployment opponents would continue pointing to the Vietnam experience as an example of why US forces should remain confined to barracks. However, whilst there was certainly nothing new in the fact that Washington's debates over US involvement in Bosnia were dominated by references to the Vietnam War, these debates were to see a dramatically novel twist in which – in an astonishing departure from the post-Vietnam 'norm' – the process of publicly alluding to Vietnam as a way of stymieing support for the deployment of US forces *was led and sustained by the White House itself.*

This was a marked change in the White House's 'relationship' with the Vietnam Syndrome. White House deployment planning throughout the post-Vietnam years had consistently demonstrated that the key fears and concerns associated with the Vietnam Syndrome – open-ended military commitment, the incurring of casualties, no specified end to the military operation in question – *did* appear to affect executive branch policymakers as they deliberated how to respond to foreign conflicts. However, throughout this period, they had done everything they could not to articulate their Vietnam concerns to the American public-political arena; indeed, successive presidential administrations – from Carter to Bush – had attempted to

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[97] Colin Powell (1995), *A Soldier's Way*, Hutchinson, London, pp. 558 & 576; Herspring (2005), pp. 355-356.
[98] See Gelb (1994).

publicly *renounce* the Vietnam Syndrome in an effort to move America beyond the foreign policy timidity it was popularly thought to impose.

However, the vigour of this presidential 'assault' on the Vietnam Syndrome was to be dramatically checked as the conflict in Bosnia Herzegovina began making front-page news in the United States. Adamant that US troops should not be sent into Bosnia's intense hostilities, but coming under considerable public-political pressure to 'do something' about the crisis, President Bush searched for ways of publicly justifying the withholding of US forces from Bosnia. In a vigorous overturning of convention, he did so by publicly invoking the Vietnam Syndrome. Having told Americans, in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf victory, that America had 'kicked' the Vietnam Syndrome, he now reinvigorated it, clearly thinking that by doing so, he might diminish Americans' willingness to support US military involvement in the Balkans. Bush told Americans that he would not send US troops to Bosnia because the Vietnam Syndrome still counselled against incautious interventions: '…never get bogged down in a guerrilla war where you don't know what the hell you're doing'.[99] As chapter 6 vividly demonstrates, the succeeding Clinton administration continued in this vein for a considerable period of Bosnia's war.

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[99] Michael Putzel, 'Treading Cautiously: Warnings of Military Folly', *The Boston Globe*, 7th August, 1992; Sandy Grady, 'Bush Wary of Balkan Snakepit Pressured By World Opinion, President Seeks Low-Risk Military Option For Defending Bosnia', *The Charlotte Observer*, 8th August, 1992.

An enduring Vietnam Syndrome

By mid-1995, with the White House – now under Bill Clinton's stewardship – still obstinately refusing to send US troops into Bosnia's hostilities, it thus seemed that the White House 'relationship' with the Vietnam Syndrome had come full circle. During the Reagan years, the dispelling of the Syndrome was seen as imperative in upholding Americans' tacit acceptance that force deployments were a distinct possibility in the fight against Communism. Now, absent the Soviet threat, and with a marked decline in presidential deployment-advocacy (at least where messy, localised ethnic conflicts were concerned), the White House was more than willing to re-sensitise Americans' deployment-aversions by publicly re-invoking the Vietnam Syndrome.

However, the Syndrome was not something to toy with; this new White House public diplomatic strategy had significant consequences. It became clear during the mid-1990s that whilst the ending of the Cold War had greatly changed the dynamics and imperatives of international politics, two elements of foreign policymaking had *not* changed: firstly, Presidents were still being confronted with situations which might require the deployment of US forces; secondly, the President would still have to publicly confront the Vietnam Syndrome in order to garner broad domestic support for such an action. These imperatives became vividly evident to President Clinton as – after nearly three years of refusing to do so – he committed himself to sending US troops into Bosnia as part of NATO's mission to oversee that country's fragile peace. Once Clinton had sanctioned this change of stance, he found that the White House's prolonged 'use' of the Vietnam Syndrome had created a considerable problem.

Quite simply, the Clinton administration discovered that it could not garner broad public-political support for sending 25,000 US peacekeeping troops into Bosnia

because – it seemed – many Americans were now concerned about the 'Vietnamness' of Bosnia and convinced that sending US troops there risked 'miring' the United States in 'another Vietnam'. Given that the White House itself had been emphasising just this message for the previous three years, it is hardly surprising that many Americans (especially in Congress) now appeared to take this view and that the Clinton administration could not persuade them otherwise.

Thus, despite the frequent and (during the Reagan and early Bush years, at least) persistent White House efforts to publicly disavow the Vietnam Syndrome, it was still very much alive and kicking throughout the 1990s. And, if the existence of the Syndrome is confirmed by its mere mention – as right-wing conservatives in Washington had worried throughout the 1970s and 1980s – then it remained a palpable influence on American foreign policymaking at the onset of the new millennium itself, a longevity apparently confirmed by Louis Galambos' observation that the Vietnam War 'still lingers in [America's] national politics and foreign policy decisions.'[100]

Conclusion

The Vietnam War had profound and varied impacts upon the United States. The overview provided by this chapter has vividly illustrated them. It has shown not just why the Vietnam Syndrome arose but also how and why it has continued to be so influential on America's thinking on the use of military force. This chapter has also shown that, despite what much of the literary reference to the Vietnam Syndrome has

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[100] Louis Galambos, 'Introduction' in Neu (2000), pp. xii-xiii.

implied, the post-Vietnam American polity has *not* been uniformly opposed to supporting force deployments. Despite the trauma of the Vietnam experience, many Americans have continued to hold the Wilsonian belief that a powerful US military *can* act as a force for good in the world. Indeed, whilst this viewpoint was espoused stridently by conservatives in the post-Vietnam period, it was espoused with equal vigour by many liberals in the post-Cold War period as they petitioned the White House to deploy US forces to humanitarian crises. Despite intervention-advocacy evidencing itself throughout the post-Vietnam years, however (not least within the White House itself), the Vietnam Syndrome has nevertheless maintained a fixture-like presence on the American foreign policymaking landscape, despite the efforts of successive Presidents to move America beyond it.

The longevity of the Vietnam Syndrome has been fuelled by several factors. Not the least of these is that despite the wealth of thought, money and technological expertise which has been expended on trying to fail-safe US military operations (thus notionally eradicating US military setbacks and the deployment-aversions that such setbacks inevitably foment within the American public-political arena), the RMA has not changed the fact that conflict-zones *continue* to harbour the dangers which killed so many American soldiers in Vietnam. As this study shows, successive Presidents have sought to mitigate against incurring military casualties and operational open-endedness as they have envisioned deployment strategies throughout the post-Vietnam years. At times, their concerns over securing these prerequisites have been so pronounced that – rather than take the risk – they have decided not to deploy US forces at all.

However, there are times when (for a variety of reasons) deployment *is* the chosen option for the White House and this option has consistently met with the

opposition of broad swathes of public-political America. This domestic opposition has undoubtedly been nourished by some of the US military's experiences during the post-Vietnam years. The US mission in Somalia is just one instance which shows that military operations can quickly go awry. Regardless the technology employed and the soundness of the planning process, it seems that *any* deployment into a conflict-zone brings with it the chance of setbacks, even for the world's foremost military power. When these setbacks have occurred, the Vietnam Syndrome has been reinvigorated.

The persistent 'presence' of the Vietnam Syndrome *has* undoubtedly made it much harder for Presidents to win broad domestic backing for force deployments. At times when it has taken the decision to deploy, the White House has invariably had to try to stop 'Vietnam radars' from buzzing, in its efforts to generate this backing. However, whilst Presidents and their administrations *have* typically taken pains to try to convince the American public-political arena that deploying US troops will *not* mire the United States in 'another Vietnam', it is also true that throughout the post-Vietnam era, deployments have proceeded apace anyway, regardless the White House's success in quelling Vietnam fears and rallying broad domestic support for the deployment in question. Indeed, the ability (and indeed the willingness) of Presidents to circumvent domestic opinion on the issue of using US forces flies in the face of much of what has been written about the Vietnam Syndrome. Not only does it contradict the notion of a more constrained post-Vietnam foreign policy presidency; it also challenges the supposition that an empowered post-Vietnam Congress has been able to act as a greater check on the White House's deployment authority, through the ratification of the War Powers Act and the enhancement of the legislature's oversight powers. The principal reasons for the White House's willingness, and ability, to so

routinely circumvent Congress – and indeed the broader domestic arena – on this issue is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

US Presidents and the Domestic Politics of Military Intervention in the United States

One of the glaring characteristics of US force deployments is the dominance of the President in dictating if and how US forces are to be deployed. This chapter considers why, despite the apparent obstacle represented by the Vietnam Syndrome, the President has continued to hold most of the cards on this issue and why he has been so able to circumvent the wishes of other domestic actors – principally the Congress – in this area.

For all that Presidents are perennially keen to curry favour as far as possible with the legislative branch and the broader American public-political arena – Congress, the media and wider public opinion are not just vital and tangible aspects of America's liberal democratic political processes but also the key to the President's re-election – this does *not* mean that White House deployment decisions always coincide with the wishes of these constituencies. Indeed, these decisions frequently *pre-empt* a coherent public-political stance on any given foreign crisis. On the rare occasions when a discernible and consistent stance *does* seem to be evident within the public-political arena, Presidents – advised by their 'inner-circle' of 'expert' political and military policymakers – are frequently prepared to take decisions which clearly contravene these stances. Domestic challenges to, or dissent over, White House deployment decisions typically do not alter the decisions in question and the President consistently appears to act imperiously when it comes to decisions on the use of US forces. This convention is one of the most glaring characteristics exposed by this

study. Both the reasons and the mechanisms for this presidential dominance are considered in this chapter.

Domestic influences on presidential deployment decision-making: A brief literary overview

There exists a vast and mature literature suggesting that the use of US military forces *is* influenced by domestic actors operating out-with the executive branch of government in the United States. Writing in 1927, Harold Lasswell noted that with increasing public awareness of the political process, government management of public opinion was now 'an inescapable corollary of...modern war'.[1] More recently, Michael Leigh has observed that the imperatives of the domestic social-political scene are often 'more salient' to those taking deployment decisions than the international crisis to which they are responding.[2] J. M. Rabbie contends that a rounded understanding of international conflict can often be best understood by examining 'the internal or domestic conflicts of interests' of the nations concerned.[3] Joe Hagan observes that it is the 'domestic patterns' of major powers, as well as international 'systemic structures', which steer the path of international politics.[4] Melvin Small offers a concurring view, noting that 'domestic components lurk behind virtually every case of American international interaction'.[5] Rejecting any notion of executive monopoly of these processes, J. G. Clifford points out that there is no 'single 'maker''

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[1] Harold Lasswell (1971), *Propaganda Technique in World War One*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 15.
[2] Leigh (1976), p. xiii.
[3] J. M. Rabbie, 'Group Processes as stimulants of aggression', in Jo Groebel & Robert A. Hinde (eds.) (1991), *Aggression and war: their biological and social bases*, Cambridge University Press, p. 143.
[4] Joe D. Hagan, 'Domestic Policy Explanations in the Analysis of Foreign Policy', in Laura Neack, Jeanne A. K. Hey & Patrick J. Haney (eds.) (1995), *Foreign Policy Analysis. Continuity and Change in Its Second Generation*, Prentice Hall, p. 118.
[5] Small (1996), pp. xiii &xix.

of America's foreign policy; Clifford contends that policy outcomes flow not solely from presidential ponderings but also from the opinions of his 'inner-circle' of key political and military policy advisors, and from the complex interplay between this 'private' elite body and an array of actors within the American public-political arena, all of whom are as keen as the White House to attain interpretive dominance of the crisis in question.[6]

The sheer weight of such commentary appears to suggest strongly that the triadic influence of the Congress, the media and public opinion does indeed have the potential to influence presidential deployment decisions. Indeed, the import of the Vietnam Syndrome largely rests upon this supposition since it assumes that the Vietnam-inspired conflict-aversions residing within the American public-political arena are able to place obstacles in the way of the President's ability and willingness to deploy US forces. But how might these domestic concerns impact upon the President's deployment decisions? And which constituency has the greatest potential to offer the greatest impact upon these decisions?

Since the principal focus of this study falls upon the dynamics and interactions between the White House and Capitol Hill at times when the President is deliberating the deployment of US forces, it is to Capitol Hill that this chapter first turns its attention. The apparent demise in executive credibility after the Vietnam War prompted some commentators to depict a reinvigorated post-Vietnam Congress which – its military authority having apparently been bolstered by the enactment of the 1973 War Powers Act – 'significantly reversed Presidential authority on the use of force'.[7] The question of whether Congress – and indeed the broader congressional-media-

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[6] J. Garry Clifford, 'Bureaucratic Politics', in Michael J. Hogan & Thomas G. Paterson (eds.) (2004), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, Cambridge University Press, second edition, p. 93.

[7] Nogee (1981), p. 189.

public opinion triad – actually *has* managed to impose itself upon presidential deployment decision-making is given greater consideration below.

Executive-legislative relations with respect to the use of military force:

A brief constitutional background

Arguably the most significant confrontations which emerge over the deployment of US forces are those which take place between the White House and Congress. As was noted in the previous chapter, congressional foreign policy authority was bolstered after the Vietnam War, in no small part because of the enactment of the War Powers Act of 1973. As chapters 4-6 vividly demonstrate, at times when the deployment of US forces is seen to be a possibility in the United States, much of the opposition arrayed against the White House emanates from Capitol Hill, and much of this opposition typically centres upon *who* – between the legislative and executive branches of government – should have a say in the deployment in question. Indeed, this issue frequently appears to provoke as much contestation as the question of *whether* and *why* US forces should be deployed in the first place.[8]

However, it is important to note at this point that whilst much of the post-Vietnam commentary on, and construal of, legislative-executive use-of-force confrontation risks giving the impression that this dissention is purely a post-Vietnam phenomenon, this is most certainly *not* the case. Such confrontation would doubtless evidence itself even if the United States had *not* been involved in the Vietnam War. Indeed, a quick perusal of the American constitution reveals that inter-branch

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[8] Jentleson (1997), pp. 39-70.

wrangling over the use of US military forces was willingly sanctioned by those who prescribed the guiding edicts for the newly independent United States.

Arguably the most significant characteristic of the war-making statutes written into the constitution is that any American commitment to war should be agreed upon by both the legislative *and* executive branches of government.[9] From the perspective of those who formulated the constitution, there were very good reasons for this. Contemptuous of what they decried as the 'undemocratic, executive-dominated' system of British governance, and mindful that they had not fought against British rule merely to install an 'elective despotism' of their own, the constitution's framers sought to provide the United States with a system of governance which would avoid concentrating decision-making power with any one institution, or person, in government.[10] Pronouncing the President Commander-in-Chief of United States' armed forces ensured that the nation's military chiefs would be answerable to an elected *civilian* leader. However, this ostensible check on military hubris was also imposed upon the President himself, with Congress being endowed not only with the power to formally declare war, but also with appropriative power over the nation's military spending.[11] Concerns over whether such an arrangement was suitable for responding decisively to immediate or unforeseen military threats were addressed by formally endowing the Commander-in-Chief with the authority to take autonomous action against 'foreign attacks'. These emergency provisions aside, however, the constitution's framers were of a clear mind; namely, that both Congress *and* the President would steer America's military engagements.[12]

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[9] Jentleson (1997), pp. 41-42; Banks & Straussman (1999), p. 167.
[10] Foley & Owens (1996), p. 2; McKay (1997), pp. 52-53.
[11] John Dumbrell (1997), *The Making of U.S. Foreign Policy*, Manchester University Press, second edition, p. 55.
[12] H. Bailey and J. Shafritz (eds.) (1988), *The American Presidency*, Chicago, Dorsey, p. 21; McKay (1997), p 51; Jentleson (1997), p. 42; Foley & Owens (1996), p. 367.

It should thus come as little surprise that inter-branch competitiveness over America's military activities has emerged to become one of the hallmarks of American political history. As Bruce Jentleson observes, the popular depiction of American foreign policymaking being tantamount to 'an invitation to struggle' between the President and Congress could be dismissed by now as clichéd, if it didn't continue to so graphically characterise inter-branch wrangling over US force deployments.[13] However, the extent to which the relationship on this issue has been one of executive-legislative equivalence during the post-Vietnam period is highly questionable.

The executive-legislative 'struggle' for America's foreign policy: the congressional role in deployment decision-making

Congress and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

There have certainly been notable instances in which the post-Vietnam Congress *has* assumed the significant foreign policy role envisioned for it by the constitution's framers. This section examines just such an episode. On Christmas Eve of 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan with the aim of preventing an Islamic government seizing power from the quasi-Communist Peoples' Democratic Party, headed by Nur Muhammad Taraki.[14] Drawing attention to the presence of Soviet forces just 300 miles from the Persian Gulf coast, President Jimmy Carter responded by ordering a build-up of US forces in the Indian Ocean and by publicly announcing that any threat

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[13] Jentleson (1997) p. 41.
[14] See Sandy Gall (1988), *Afghanistan: Agony of a Nation*, Random House, pp. 3-7.

to Middle Eastern oil supplies would be deemed 'an assault on the vital interests of the United States' which would be 'repelled by any means necessary, including military force'.[15] Less conspicuously, Carter also initiated a modest, covert CIA-run weapons-supply programme aimed at providing Afghan guerrillas (the Mujahedin) with the means to fight Soviet forces. However, Washington's assistance proved ineffective in bringing anything approaching parity to the conflict, especially given the Soviets' unchallenged air superiority over the Afghan resistance forces.

The ineffectiveness of this programme, and the succeeding Reagan administration's prolonged unwillingness to increase American assistance to the Afghans, provoked rumblings of discontent from many in Washington DC. This mood was sustained in no small part by the lobbying efforts of Congressman Charlie Wilson, who had personally visited Afghanistan and had spoken with Mujahedin commanders in the field. A Vietnam veteran himself, Wilson returned home to Washington from Afghanistan with a clear idea of what America's assistance programme would have to provide if the Afghan resistance was to prevail over the Soviets: shoulder-held surface-to-air missile launchers, called Stingers. Providing the Mujahedin with these easy-to-use weapons would, Wilson felt, play havoc with a Soviet military strategy whose success rested largely upon its unchallenged aerial dominance.

In concert with Wilson's informed advice, both the House and Senate Defence Appropriations subcommittees met and agreed to substantially increase funds that the CIA could draw upon, for the purchase and supply of Stingers to the Mujahedin. These committees twice subsequently sanctioned add-on funds for the programme. However, still resistant to any escalation of the programme, the Reagan

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[15] Klare (1982), p. 75.

administration argued that these weapons would be too sophisticated for the Afghan fighters and the Pentagon continued to refuse to spend the appropriated money.

Despite the 'many bureaucratic hurdles' the Reagan administration put in the way of the programme, the Stinger programme funds *were* finally activated, the administration responding to legislators' threats that Congress would withdraw funding and support from some of President Reagan's flagship domestic policies. And, despite the President's scepticism, the Stinger supply programme proved hugely successful. The ability of these missile launchers to shoot down Soviet aircraft was decisive in changing the balance of the conflict. Indeed, their introduction was widely seen as being pivotal in forcing the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan in defeat (in February 1989), unwilling to sustain the human and economic costs of a war in which the playing field was now considerably levelled. This shift was catalysed almost exclusively by prolonged congressional pressure on a reluctant executive in Washington DC, and it catalysed a change not just in the Soviet-Afghan conflict, but possibly also the wider the East-West struggle. [16]

The congressional role in shaping American policy towards the Afghanistan War is just one example of how Congress can steer America's foreign policy. Congress' actions during this period were very much in keeping with the constitutional prescription that the legislature should play a decisive role in American foreign policymaking – doubtless this episode would meet the approval of the constitution's framers. However, whilst these events provide a vivid example of the potential that Congress has to make its mark on the making of American foreign policy, it seems that Capitol Hill's ability to make such an impact on what is probably

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[16] Murtha (2006), p. 55-59.

the gravest foreign policy area of all – namely, the decision to actually deploy US forces into combat – is somewhat less pronounced.

Ignoring the old goats: the rise of the presidential 'inner-circle' and the continuing marginalisation of Congress in post-Vietnam deployment decision-making

There are many reasons why Congress' foreign policy authority appears to dissipate markedly on the issue of deploying US forces, despite the fact that this diminution appears to stand at odds with its constitutionally-mandated empowerments. Congress enjoys two notable prerogatives with regard to military deployments. Firstly, it controls the funding for such operations. Secondly, only it has the right to formally declare war, an authority over US military operations which Congress sought to bolster by the enactment of the 1973 War Powers Act, at the end of the Vietnam War. In reality, however, this apparent strengthening of Congress' existing pre-Vietnam authority has done little to swing deployment authority away from the post-Vietnam White House.

There are several reasons for this. For a start, the institutional idiosyncrasies of American federalism and joint-control governance have frequently been derided as being ill-suited to decisive use-of-force decision-making. William Banks, Jeffrey Straussman and David MacKay all depict inevitable congressional decision-making lethargy, given Congress' lack of consistently shared policy objectives and mutually acceptable co-operative frameworks for engaging with crisis decision-making.[17] Congress, James Lindsay observes, is a *they* not an *it*, and the disparateness of its

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[17] McKay (1997), pp. 187 & 190-191; Banks & Straussman (1999), p. 198.

hundreds of members is simply ill-suited to the unified assertiveness which effective deployment decision-making typically appears to demand.[18]

By contrast, executive branch offices such as the National Security Council (NSC), the State Department and the Department of Defence are specifically tasked with assessing and coordinating foreign policy and – most importantly – they also have intimate contact with the White House. Whilst the ability of each individual institution to command the President's ear is typically dependent upon a mixture of presidential preference and how effectively each institution asserts itself, it is executive branch practitioners – most notably those civilian and military policy advisors who comprise the President's 'inner-circle' – who are always 'the central core of the policy-making process' when it comes to interpreting a foreign crisis and earmarking the most appropriate response to it.[19]

The increasing prominence of the President's 'inner-circle' has been one of the most significant characteristics of US crisis foreign policy decision-making in recent decades. Indeed, it is one of the ironies of post-Vietnam US foreign policymaking that the 'experts' and elites who were so heavily implicated in the Vietnam failure have, since Vietnam, actually become *more firmly entrenched* in executive branch foreign policy making. They work closely with the President and they enjoy a decision-making influence that elected legislators simply do not.[20] The rise and rise of the presidential 'inner-circle' thus cannot be ignored when one is examining executive-legislative relations on the issue of deployment decision-making. Truly dominating this process, this presidential clique has persistently

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[18] James. M. Lindsay, 'Cowards, Beliefs and Structures. Congress and the Use of Force', in H. W. Brands, (ed.), (2000), *The Use of Force After the Cold War*, Texas A & M University Press, College Station, p. 151.
[19] Dobson & Marsh (2006), pp. 12-13.
[20] Balogh (2000), p. 39; Deborah Stone (2002), *Policy Paradox. The Art of Political Decision Making*, W.W. Norton Publishing, third (revised) edition, pp. 7 & 376.

endorsed the value, even the necessity, of an executive-legislative partition when the issues are at their gravest, and has taken a consistently dim view of congressional 'intrusion' into crisis foreign policymaking.[21]

There are some telling examples of the attitudes which underpin this dismissive executive branch attitude towards the legislature. At the Texas State Republican Convention in Dallas in June 1992, President George H. W. Bush was asked why he was not able to bring the same assuredness to his domestic politics that he did to his foreign policymaking. His response – 'that I don't have to get the permission of some old goat in the United States Congress to kick Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. That's the reason' – is not only instructive in shedding light upon how this President viewed the value of congressional involvement in deployment decision-making; it also illuminates how he viewed *his own* deployment empowerments, as President, vis-à-vis Congress.[22] Interestingly, this dismissive view of Congress' value to foreign policy decision-making is by no means new; writing nearly two hundred years earlier, Thomas Jefferson espoused similar sentiments, noting that it was the 'tyranny of the legislature' that policymakers had the most to fear from as they took, and tried to implement, political decisions.[23]

The views reflect an established debate over how far 'democratic values' or 'elite expertise' should steer political decision-making in liberal democracies such as the United States. This debate raises some compelling and controversial questions. For example, should decisions on the use of military force be driven by whatever the broader public-political mood appears to want, in keeping with the 'democratic ideal'? Or are these decisions simply too important to be left hostage to a fickle and

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[21] Record (2002), p. 28.
[22] Bush's remarks recorded in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, June 29th 1992. Cited in Grimmett, 1st May, 2007, p. 27 (footnote 62).
[23] Quoted in Alexis de Tocqueville (2000), *Democracy in America*, Abridged edition, Hacket Publishing Company, p. 117 (2. 272)

uninformed public mood? Should they not instead be presided over by 'experts' whose knowledge and experience makes them best placed to steer the nation's foreign policy? Furthermore, if these individuals 'know best', should their opinions and decisions not prevail, even if they are greatly at odds with the national mood and the opinions of the elected legislature? Writing in the early 1950s, George Kennan articulated the classic 'expert-centric' perspective. Warning of the dangers of 'diplomacy by dilettantism', he championed the 'principle of professionalism' and declared that America's foreign policy should be placed in the hands of 'a corps of professional officers'. Trying seriously to incorporate the mood of Congress and the media into the decision-making process would, Kennan believed, compromise the expertise of the 'professionals' and risk seeing US foreign policy 'led astray into areas of emotionalism and subjectivity.'[24]

Kennan's views clearly show little sympathy to what many people would feel is the 'democratic ideal'; the very ideals, indeed, that many Americans view as being quintessentially *American*. Despite its apparent contravention of 'American values', however, this study shows clearly that Kennan's 'undemocratic' counsel for deployment decision-making in Washington DC has been well-realised throughout the post-Vietnam years and that this has had considerable implications for congressional involvement in force deployment decisions. Despite America's status as a liberal democracy, and despite the fact that it sits uneasily with the constitutional remit for legislative-executive co-operation on this issue, post-Vietnam Presidents have almost reflexively assumed command at times when the deployment of US forces may be required. At such times, Congress' empowerments in this area have

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[24] George F. Kennan (1984), *American Diplomacy*, The University of Chicago Press; expanded 5th edition, pp. 93-94. Another significant figure in US foreign policymaking who has advocated the 'expert-centric' approach is Henry Kissinger. See, Kissinger (2001).

often been rendered largely irrelevant in the face of the President's open willingness to ignore Congress' 'old goats' if he sees fit to do so.

Congress' power of the purse and congressional war powers

The frequent subordination of Congress in American deployment decision-making can be further examined by looking more closely at how Congress' two major empowerments in this area – control over funding for US military operations and the legislative authority enshrined in the 1973 War Powers Act – are persistently rendered impotent in the face of presidential assertiveness. The popular idea of Congress having the 'power of the purse' over any use of the US military carries with it such an authoritative air since it implies that there is just one 'purse' to which Congress holds the key. In fact, this is not the case and Presidents have frequently found little difficulty in circumventing congressional fiscal obstinacy by sourcing alternative 'purses' to fund military operations.[25] For example, congressional threats to block funding for the deployment of US forces to Bosnia in 1995 (see chapter 6) saw President Clinton's Defence Secretary William Perry assert that he would simply draw the funds from 'other defence accounts', in order to pay the estimated $1.5 billion cost of the operation.[26] However, as will be demonstrated in the case studies, it is also true that Congress is typically *unwilling* to undermine the President by withholding funds for endeavours which are often very serious in nature, and where American credibility is at stake. The reasons for this apparent legislative willingness to defer are discussed later in this chapter.

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[25] Dobson & Marsh (2006), p. 9.
[26] 'Read Our Lips': Congress Must Say No To Troops in Bosnia, *Now*', Decision Brief (No. 95-D 86) from the *Center For Security Policy*, 1st November 1995.

On the second issue, that of congressional empowerment over war-making, it may well be the case that Congress is constitutionally mandated to sound the tocsin of war. However, it is also the case that America's numerous engagements with international conflict in the previous few decades have not actually seen the United States involved in hostilities which have carried the formal designation of 'war'. In fact, from the time of President Washington to the present day, Congress has enacted just 11 formal declarations of war against foreign nations, in 5 different wars; the last of these declarations was on 5th June 1942, against Rumania.[27] Indeed, despite its considerable involvement in international conflict in the post-World War Two period, it appears that the United States does not involve its forces in 'war' anymore; this designation has been absent even from engagements which have involved the commitment of several hundred thousand US troops and where US forces have been involved in offensive 'war-fighting' operations. In domestic political terms, this apparent demise of formal 'war' declarations has inevitably undermined legislative branch deployment authority, given that much of this authority pertains to US military involvement in crises which carry just this designation.[28] Presidents might feasibly have pushed Congress to formally designate some of America's post-World War Two military operations as 'war'; however, as will be discussed, there are very good reasons for why they have not done so.

The 1973 War Powers Act sought to redress the 'war anomaly' by notionally forcing the White House to engage in executive-legislative deployment co-operation, *regardless of whether or not US military operations actually fell under the designation of 'war'*. However, this Vietnam-inspired attempt to address Congress'

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[27] Jennifer K. Elsea & Richard F. Grimmett, *Declarations of War and Authorizations for the Use of Military Force: Historical Background and Legal Implications*, Congressional Research Service Report (Order Code RL 31133), 8th March, 2007, p. 29.
[28] Ibid., p. 27.

deployment marginalisation has been largely unsuccessful. Presidents have responded to this legislative challenge with vigour and have continued to do whatever they deem necessary to uphold their dominance of this crucial policy area. It may well flout America's democratic ideals (and, indeed, the American constitution), but it has been very much the case throughout the post-Vietnam years that what the President says goes, vis-à-vis foreign conflicts. As will be shown in chapters 4, 5 and 6, the Vietnam Syndrome may well have increased the vigour with which the White House has had to publicly 'make the case' for deploying US forces but the consistent strength of domestic deployment-opposition has certainly *not* stopped Presidents from deploying, even if Congress has appeared to oppose the deployment in question. At such times, Presidents have often exercised considerable rhetorical guile. Not only have they articulated what have often appeared to be quite exaggerated rationales for deploying US forces, in an effort to sway domestic opinion, they have also used their interpretive dominance of the issues in order to stop the enactment of War Powers resolutions which would allow Congress a say in the deployment decision-making process.

Dancing on a dime: haggling over the War Powers Resolutions

Congress' continuing marginalisation in this policy area can largely be located in the fact that successive Presidents have continued to act very much as 'Imperial Presidents' when foreign crises have captured America's attention. A more expansive view of their constitutional rights since the end of the Second World War has seen Presidents increasingly move to use military force *without* prior congressional

approval. The apparent stiffening of Congress' powers in this area through the War Powers Act has done very little to change this convention.[29] Indeed, every single President who has faced a possible invoking of the War Powers Act by Congress has dismissed the Act as an unconstitutional infringement on the authority of the Commander-in-Chief. This stance was given considerable backing when, on 23rd June 1983, the US Supreme Court declared legislative vetoes unconstitutional (*INS* v. *Chadha*).[30] With the legality of the War Powers Act still un-clarified by the Supreme Court, Presidents have continued to state that whilst they *welcome* congressional authorisation for force deployments, *the President is not formally required to seek this authorisation* and that Congress' War Powers empowerments are in fact an unconstitutional infringement upon the Commander-in-Chief's powers.[31] As the case studies in the next three chapters demonstrate, Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton all responded to congressional efforts to assert policy influence through the War Powers Resolutions by confidently rejecting the ability of these statutes to supersede the President's own constitutional empowerments on the use of US military forces.

However, executive branch vigour in blocking the enactment of the War Powers resolutions does not stop there. Presidents deploying US forces have also been able to stop their deployments coming under congressional War Powers oversight by simply *denying the applicability of the War Powers resolutions* to the deployment and the crisis in question. Bizarrely, perhaps, much of the executive-legislative jousting which has accompanied presidential deployment decisions has revolved around *Section 2* of the War Powers Act, which stipulates that:

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[29] Ibid., p. 29.
[30] Grimmett, 1st May, 2007, pp. 8-9. This judicial decision is available to view at the Cornell University Law School website. Available at: http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0462_0919_ZS.html
[31] Jentleson (1997), p. 42; Grimmett, 16th January, 2007, p. 2.

> …The collective judgement of both the Congress and the President will apply to the introduction of United States Armed Forces into *hostilities*, or into situations where *imminent involvement in hostilities* is clearly indicated by the circumstances (italics added).[32]

In response to Congress' demands that US force deployments should come under War Powers authority, Presidents have simply denied that key words contained in this section actually apply to the crisis in question; specifically, 'hostilities' and 'imminent involvement in hostilities'. As the next chapter demonstrates, for example, President Reagan successfully delayed a congressional deployment time-limit on the 1983 US Marine deployment to Lebanon by repeatedly stressing that 'there is no expectation that US forces will become involved in hostilities.'[33] Reagan's justifying logic was clear; if the President states that American troops *are not involved in 'hostilities',* then that is indeed the case and there is thus no basis for enacting War Powers resolutions which would allow Congress a collaborative over-viewing role in the deployment. Indeed, debates over the wording of the War Powers Act can reach ridiculous proportions, especially given the gravity of the events against which these debates typically take place. Even as US Marines were taking their first casualties in Beirut, Reagan was still resisting congressional involvement in the deployment by arguing that the crisis the Marines were involved in did *not* actually constitute 'hostilities'.[34]

The obstacles that Congress faces in trying to bring War Powers resolutions to bear on US force deployments extends even beyond this. As Louis Fisher and David Gray Adler point out, even where Presidents *do* see fit to report to Congress under the provisions of the Act, the sixty-to-ninety day deployment 'clock' enacted by the

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[32] Grimmett, 1st May, 2007. Appendix C, p. 80.
[33] George C. Wilson, 'Skirmishing Starts on How Long Marines Can Stay in Beirut', *The Washington Post*, 1st October, 1982.
[34] Ibid.

invoking of the Resolution only begins 'ticking' if the President reports the mission under a specific subsection of the *Reporting* section of the Act: *Section 4 (a) (1)*.[35] Unsurprisingly, Fisher and Gray observe that Presidents typically do not tend to report force deployments under 4 (a) (1); they often choose instead to declare simply that they are reporting the deployment in question to Congress 'consistent with the War Powers Resolutions'. The glaring omission of this (more 'informal') type of announcement for congressional dissenters is that the deployment time-clock – which is set ticking *only* by the President specifically invoking Section 4 (a) (1) – remains inoperative so that there remains, despite the President's *ostensible* succumbing to War Powers authority, no formal grounds for congressional involvement in overseeing and time-limiting the deployment in question. Any such agreement is frequently only reached at the President's discretion.[36] Once again, these measured White House obfuscations are frequently accompanied by the President telling Congress that he is not *obligated* to cite Section 4 (a) (1) anyway, since he is acting 'pursuant to the President's constitutional authority with respect to the conduct of foreign relations and as commander-in-chief of the armed forces.'[37]

It is precisely because of these various factors that the enactment of the War Powers Act has in fact emerged as something of a hollow victory for Congress. Initially regarded by some as 'the salvation of the American political system', the Act's effectiveness in reining in executive authority on the use of force has in fact been negligible. This is not only because Presidents have increasingly neglected to formally designate US military operations as 'war'; it is also due to the fact that every single President who has faced the enactment of War Powers resolutions has managed

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[35] Louis Fisher & David Gray Adler, 'The War Powers Resolution: Time To Say Goodbye', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 113, No. 1, Spring 1998, p. 11; Grimmett, 1st May, 2007, p. 24.
[36] Ibid.
[37] President Reagan cited in George C. Wilson, 'Reagan Assures Congress Marines Will Avoid Combat', *The Washington Post*, 26th August, 1982; Grimmett, 1st May, 2007, p. 15.

to both circumvent a formal enactment *and* publicly dismiss the resolutions themselves as an unconstitutional infringement on his authority as Commander-in-Chief.[38]

These factors have clearly had a profound impact upon Congress' ability to exercise any authority upon force deployments. The Vietnam War may have produced both the Vietnam Syndrome (a significant impediment to the White House's ability to rally America behind US force deployments) *and* the War Powers Act (an apparently decisive piece of legislation compelling the White House to involve Congress in these deployments) but these notional obstacles have done little to stop Presidents from assuming control when a crisis arises which may result in US troops being deployed. Indeed if Arthur Schlesinger's classic depiction of an 'Imperial Presidency' has been so oft-repeated within the discourses on American foreign policy, then it is undoubtedly the ability of the White House to so routinely circumvent Congress at such times which plays a significant part in sustaining this characterisation.

The importance of presidential status

Aside from the frequent willingness – and ability – of Presidents to deflect congressional 'intrusion' into deployment decision-making, there is another significant factor which frequently consigns Congress to a 'junior role' in this area – the status of the presidency itself. Fulfilling a role which far exceeds the mere execution of policy, the American President is the sole leader of a nation which, since

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[38] Jentleson (1997), p. 42; Grimmett, 16th January, 2007, p. 2.

its very inception, has viewed itself as 'exceptional'.[39] The President is thus broadly expected to act, *and to be treated*, as someone who embodies the 'history and greatness' of America and nowhere is this expectation more tangible than in the field of foreign policymaking, a policy area whose importance to the United States rose inexorably through the course of the twentieth century.[40]

Surprisingly, perhaps, given the popular assumption that the White House was badly damaged by the Vietnam experience, this veneration has continued throughout the post-Vietnam era. Americans have frequently demonstrated a reluctance to undermine the President at times of crisis. This has gone some way to preserving the latitude that the President has continued to enjoy (and assume), at times when the smoke from foreign battlefields has attracted America's attention in the post-Vietnam era. The fact remains that events such as the Vietnam War and the Watergate and Iran-Contra scandals have done little to diminish the view held by many on Capitol Hill and beyond, that the Commander-in-Chief of America's armed forces *should* enjoy discretionary authority to execute successful deployment initiatives.[41] The need to have an authoritative focal point for explaining foreign crises, to formulate responses to them, and to rally Americans to support these responses has thus seen Congress consistently cede ground to the White House. Despite the partisanship which so typically fuels much of the inter-branch haggling over force deployments, and despite the fact that there is considerable potential for the President's political opponents to undermine him on an issue which has such potential to go awry, there appears to remain a broadly-held acceptance that the US military *does* have a role to

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[39] On American exceptionalism, see: Madsen (1998); Roper (2000); McEvoy-Levy (2001); McCrisken (2003).
[40] Foley & Owens (1996), p. 368; Dumbrell (1997), p. 56.
[41] Alexander Hamilton (*Federalist* No. 75), cited in Jentleson, (1997), p. 42; McKay (1997), pp. 187 & 190; Lindsay (2000), p. 152.

play in world affairs and that the President is *the* natural locus of authority in conceptualising and steering this role.[42]

Indeed, whilst all three of the case studies bear out this observation, the events detailed in chapter 6 (which charts the response of the Clinton administration to the conflict in Bosnia Herzegovina) are especially marked. As Ryan Hendrickson notes, the onset of the 104th Congress in 1995 was perhaps the likeliest moment in recent decades at which a congressional challenge to White House deployment authority might have evidenced itself. With a Republican majority in both Houses, with President Clinton viewed as weak and unpopular by many high-ranking representatives and with a swathe of opinion in Republican circles weighted against US participation in United Nations peacekeeping projects, Hendrickson speculates that Clinton's designs for involving the United States in the UN 'peacekeeping' mission inside war-torn Bosnia Herzegovina may well have led to the 'break' of the 'war powers practice of deference to the commander in chief'. However, a feisty Republican-dominated Congress found that it could ultimately do little to prevent President Clinton from deploying 25,000 American troops to Bosnia at the end of 1995.[43]

The observations of Congressman John Murtha (Dem, PA) are instructive in illustrating the mindset which has frequently seen legislators defer to the White House in this way. Referring to President Reagan's controversial deployment of US Marines to the Lebanese conflict in 1982, Murtha notes that whilst he had 'argued in private' for the *withdrawal* of US Marines from Lebanon in 1983, he actually voted with the majority of other legislators in *supporting* President Reagan's wish to keep the Marines there. Murtha's stated reasons for this are illuminating. Firstly, he knew that

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[42] McKay (1997), pp. 187 & 190-191.
[43] Ryan Hendrickson, 'War Powers, Bosnia and the 104th Congress', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 113, No. 2, Summer 1998, pp. 241-242.

Congress was unlikely to manage to change Reagan's preferred policy option; even if there did exist a concerted congressional will to challenge either the deployment or its terms, a two-thirds majority in both Houses would have been required in order to prevail over the President's veto which would inevitably have been enacted in response to any such challenge. Secondly, Murtha asserts that he 'instinctively' supported the President on major foreign policy issues anyway, and he thought that it would look bad if Congress *did not* back the President and, by extension, the American troops in Lebanon. Cold War concerns about the implications of a failed American policy in Lebanon also featured in his thinking. Thirdly, Murtha noted that since he had been personally sent to Lebanon as an emissary of the House Speaker Thomas 'Tip' O Neill (Dem. MA), and since O'Neill had received a personal assurance from President Reagan himself over the safety of the military mission in Lebanon, O'Neill told Murtha that Murtha 'would embarrass him' if he voted against the President's deployment.[44]

Murtha's candid recollections of this episode illuminate the extent to which the President is often able to win support for force deployments merely by virtue of his office, what it stands for, and what it is charged with doing. Those in government, even if they are *politically* opposed to the President, are consistently willing to defer to him due to their national affiliations *and* their personal esteem for the office and what it represents. Legislators are patriotic American citizens themselves and they understandably have no wish to see the United States embarrassed, or to see US military operations compromised. Indeed, whilst the post-Vietnam era has seen legislators persistently criticise Presidents for acting 'undemocratically' in the taking of deployment decisions, it is not uncommon to see legislators themselves acting in

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[44] Murtha (2006), p. 43.

just such an 'undemocratic' manner as they have sought to 'do what is right for the nation' and to support the President at times of crisis. For example, Senator Dianne Feinstein (Dem. CA) can be seen to have done just that when, in late 1995, she stated publicly that she was 'pleased to give one hundred percent support' to President Clinton's deployment of US troops to Bosnia, despite her admission that 'my calls all run by the thousands to the contrary'.[45]

Murtha's second point – that he wanted to back the President and the US troops in theatre – is also significant and can be traced in no small part to the Vietnam experience. One of the widely-drawn conclusions from the Vietnam years was that dwindling congressional support was a key factor in undermining the US mission in Vietnam. The eroding of support 'back home' has often been cited as something which also contributed to the decline in moral of frontline American troops. Consequently, whilst the post-Vietnam Congress has consistently taken seriously its role as a 'check' on executive military decision-making (how effectively it has actually fulfilled this role is a different matter), legislators have also been extremely wary of taking their deployment-opposition too far. Even where Congress appears to have vigorously opposed the deployment of US forces and has castigated the President for sanctioning this action, it has been extremely careful to rein in its opposition once the deployment is imminent. Having endured criticisms during the 1970s that its dwindling support undermined the efforts of young US troops in Vietnam, being seen to be 'right behind' deployed US troops has subsequently become something of a byword of congressional protocol in the post-Vietnam years.

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[45] Dianne Feinstein, 'The Senate Debates Sending Troops to Bosnia', Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1st December 1995. NB – unless stated otherwise, the comments of congressional representatives cited in this study can be found (by date/legislator's name & statement title) at the Library of Congress' *Thomas* search facility: http://thomas.loc.gov/home/r104query.html

Congressional support for US forces deployments may not thus be attributed *solely* to legislators' respect for the man ordering the deployment.

This is not to suggest, by any measure, that Congress is timorous in its dealings with the White House on the issue of deploying US forces. As one former senior State Department official has observed, whilst Congress is *generally* willing to support White House force deployments, it is also generally accepted that the President will be 'pilloried without mercy' if the mission goes awry and will have to face all of the political fallout which that criticism will bring with it.[46] Indeed, as the next chapter shows, Congress is able to exert considerable pressure upon the White House if a deployment is prolonged and is starting to suffer setbacks. Congressional disgruntlement, whether with the mission itself or with the President's stewardship of it, will inevitably attract considerable media attention and can contribute to the build-up of pressures which may lead the White House to conclude that scaling down the operation, or even aborting it, is the only expedient option.[47] However, this influence certainly does *not* appear to extend to an ability to force the President to change his mind about deploying *in the first instance*.

The various factors discussed in the preceding sections have combined to ensure that the White House's deployment authority has not only been consistent – they have also, as John Dumbrell points out, firmly entrenched the President as the 'prime mover' in Washington's inter-branch wrangling in this area.[48]

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[46] Author interview with former State Department official, Dr William Schneider Jr. Washington DC, 10th May, 2006.
[47] Sobel (2001), pp. 42-47.
[48] Dumbrell (1997), p. 60; Banks & Straussman (1999), p. 198.

The media-public opinion dyad and its role in presidential deployment decision-making

Of course, the terms of Washington's deployment debates are not solely raised by, and confined to, the aspirations and opinions of politicians. Domestic constituencies other than Congress have also been depicted as having the ability to influence the making of US foreign policy. The American media – the 'fourth institution' – has often been seen as having just this ability. It has increasingly been characterised as being 'at the centre of a struggle to define and influence public opinion' and a 'major force' in the making of American foreign policy, one unencumbered by the partisan motivations and political cowardice which so many Americans ascribe to Congress.[49]

Joseph Pika and John Anthony Maltese observe that public scrutiny and evaluation of presidential performance is an ongoing fact of American politics, with journalists, polling organisations and academics 'constantly engaged in *contemporary evaluation* of presidential performance'. However, it seems that this attentiveness is not one-way. Presidents and their staff demonstrate a consistent interest in how they are being evaluated and in how they are doing in the opinion polls, doubtless mindful of the fact that popular Presidents appear to attain greater congressional and public support for their policies. Presidents thus have, it seems, a considerable interest in trying to pander to the wider public mood as much as possible, attain 'good press',

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[49] Lindsay (2000), p. 150. Also: L. Broadbent, J. Elridge, G. Kimmett, G. Philo, M. Spaven & K. Williams (1985), *War and Peace News*, Glasgow University Media Group, Open University Press, p. 178; Simon Serfaty, 'The Media and Foreign Policy', in Simon Serfaty (ed.) (1990), *The Media and Foreign Policy*, MacMillan, p. 1. See also, Walter Lippmann (1922), *Public Opinion*, Free Press Publishing (1997 edition); Leigh (1976); George C. Edwards & B. Dan Wood, (1999), 'Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 93, No. 2, June 1999; Jonathan Mermin (1999), *Debating War and Peace. Media Coverage of U.S. Intervention in the Post-Vietnam Era*, Princeton University Press; Western (2005).

and thus maximise their ratings.[50] That the President seeks such approval is certainly borne out by the evidence provided in this study.

This view of an influential media as a facilitator of wider public involvement in the political process also presupposes that public awareness of, and opinion on, US foreign policy also constitutes something of significance to the making of that policy. If the public read the papers, they are informed and – notionally, at least – are thus in a position to let their political leaders know whether they support certain course of action or not. Indeed, newspapers themselves often provide the platform for public opinion and dissention, through the publication of letters, editorials and opinion pieces and by the conducting of interviews and opinion polls.

Given that the Vietnam Syndrome frequently finds form in both journalistic commentary upon proposed US force deployments *and* in journalists' charting of congressional, elite and wider public opposition to deployments, the media can certainly be seen as one of the key channels through which the Vietnam Syndrome manifests itself in the American public-political arena. Given its potential to give an emotive voice to deployment-opponents' Vietnam-infused arguments *against* sending US troop to foreign theatres of conflict, this next section considers how far it is feasible to depict both the American media and domestic public opinion as having a significant influence on White House deployment decision-making, in the face of what has already been acknowledged as the White House's domineering role in this area.

The media and the domestic politics of military intervention

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[50] Joseph Pika & John Anthony Maltese (2003), *The Politics of the Presidency*, CQ Press, p. 131.

There are numerous adherents to the idea of a media-driven, or at least a media-influenced, American foreign policy. Barilleaux has speculated that the television media has considerable ability to influence the broader public view of American Presidents.[51] Rogers and Dearing find that the media appears to have a strong influence upon key policy decision-makers themselves, whilst Wood and Peake have drawn the conclusion that it is the media which influences the President's foreign policy agenda, and not vice-versa.[52] In their consideration of the domestic backdrop to decision-making, Edwards and Wood see Congress as exerting very little influence on the policymaking agenda; in contrast, they depict the media as having a 'particularly important role' in setting the presidential policy agenda.[53] As James F. Hoge notes, administrations have to be proactive if they want to maintain interpretive dominance of both a foreign crisis *and* of what the United States should do about it:

> If policymakers want to set the agenda and not leave it to the media, they must have an agenda. The existence of policy that can command public support against emotional swings stirred up by television imagery is key. In the absence of persuasive government strategy, the media will be catalytic.[54]

Hoge's observation goes to the heart of the task facing modern Presidents as they respond to foreign crises. The status and resources of his office certainly give the President every chance to dictate and lead policy. However if he prevaricates, sanctions a policy which fails, or is perceived not to be leading policy effectively or

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[51] Ryan Barilleaux (1998), *The Post-Modern Presidency: The Office after Reagan*, New York: Praeger.
[52] Everett M. Rogers & James W. Dearing, 'Agenda-Setting Research: Where Has It Been, Where Is It Going?' in Doris A. Graber (1994) (ed.), *Media Power in Politics*, CQ Press, Washington DC; B. Dan Wood & Jeffrey S. Peake, 'The Dynamics of Foreign Policy Agenda Setting', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, March 1998.
[53] Edwards & Wood (1999), p. 342.
[54] James F. Hoge Jr., 'Media Pervasiveness', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 4, July/August 1994, p. 138.

'popularly', then the media is likely to criticise him and demand alternative strategies and stances. Whether or not this criticism actually affects the President's *initial decision* to deploy US forces is, of course, a different matter but there is little doubt that such criticism can foment and sustain a public-political climate which can exert pressures upon any Commander-in-Chief who is forced to take decisions in this area.

There has been significant debate over the possibility that critical media coverage can actually affect this all-important 'initial decision' to deploy or not. In the post-Cold War period in particular, much reference has been made to the so-called 'CNN effect', the notional ability of the media – through relaying images and reports of bloody conflicts and their accompanying humanitarian tragedies back to the United States – to mobilise public-political support *for* US military interventions. Whilst some commentators maintain that such active media activity *can* persuade foreign policymakers 'to act in ways they otherwise would not', it is certain that, at the very least, a 'CNN effect' can place administrations under considerable pressure to engage with a crisis, in order to address the sufferings (perhaps most notably, the killing, starvation and forced migration of civilians as a result of conflict) which are making headline news and capturing public-political attention.[55] These pressures can become both politically damaging *and* demoralising to an administration if it is not able to effectively respond to them. As chapter 6 shows, this happened as the Clinton White House struggled to respond to the Bosnian War in a way which met broad domestic demands that the United States 'do something' about the crisis. In failing to do so, and being unable (or unwilling) to conjure effective policies which would deflect America's attention away from the crisis, the American media were able to build a momentum of critical commentary on how the White House was failing Bosnia's

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[55] DiPrizio (2002), p. 157.

civilians and effectively allowing ethnic cleansing to go unpunished. Exasperated at the relentless criticism, Clinton rounded on the American media, accusing it of trying to pressure him to take actions he did not want to take. More than once, he protested to aides that the media 'keep trying to force me into a war'. 'We have a war by CNN', he complained. [56]

Whilst advocates of the CNN effect contend that the media may have the potential to pressure the White House into actually *sanctioning* force deployments, it is also the case that the American media is also frequently at the forefront of *opposition* to any deployment of US forces. Prominent American editors and journalists have opposed presidential deployment decisions throughout the post-Vietnam years and they have understandably used their unique platform to make their opposition known. They have often been amongst the most vigorous in drawing analogies between the Vietnam experience and the current crisis in order to forward a more convincing case. Always drawn to dramatic political stories and comments, America's newspapers – whether apparently opposed to White House policy or not – have also been more than willing to cite and quote political and military deployment-opponents who have made just the same comparisons. Indeed, as far as the manifesting of the Vietnam Syndrome is concerned, it is often in the newspapers, and in televised interviews and discussions, where reference to Vietnam and the grisly consequences of deploying US forces is most palpable.

At times when the White House is deliberating the pros and cons of deploying US forces, the American media thus vividly reflects and voices both sides of the argument. Such is their national platform, and their purported 'closeness' to the

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[56] Elizabeth Drew (1995), *On the Edge. The Clinton Presidency*, Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, pp. 123-126; Dick Morris (1997) *Behind the Oval Office. Winning the Presidency in the Nineties*, Random House, New York, p. 245; Halberstam (2002), p. 317.

national mood, that media coverage and commentary *is* a significant feature of, and influence on, America's deployment debates. Presidents simply *must* acknowledge the media, and its communications, as they take deployment decisions.

Public opinion

Inextricably tied to media influence and a so-called 'CNN effect' is public opinion itself. Popular wisdom depicts a situation in which the public mood is variously reflected, shaped, articulated and addressed by both the media and Congress on foreign policy issues. Furthermore, in keeping with the 'democratic ideal', elected liberal democratic governments are supposed to be responsive to the public mood and to enact policy outcomes which at least partially reflect its wishes and moods. The significance of public opinion to the making of US foreign policymaking may have become greater since the Vietnam years. Joseph Nye is just one commentator who suggests that the American public has been less receptive to presidential deployment solicitations in the succeeding years, and that the United States has seen a significant rise in 'anti-establishment politics' during this period.[57]

The increasing spread, availability and use of media and communications technology is seen to have greatly enhanced the public's engagement with the political process. Some might argue that increasingly communications-empowered citizens, public groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are in a stronger position than ever to oppose, and even change, stated White House foreign policy

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[57] Nye (1986), p. 115.

goals and actions. This increasing public activism has been depicted as having been especially marked in the post-Cold War era when – absent the Soviet threat – domestic and foreign policy issues have becoming increasingly inter-linked. Opinion polls suggested that Americans' interests in foreign policy issues were those which had a clear domestic dimension as well – jobs, drug trafficking and illegal immigration ranked consistently highly, at least before the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001.[58]

This may be so but there are considerable difficulties in trying to designate the extent to which American public opinion *might actually impede a President's willingness to deploy US forces*. A key reason for this is that there is a predictable lack of consensus amongst Americans on the acceptability of using military force. There does indeed appear to be a considerable swathe of America which consistently responds with trepidation and resistance to any suggestion that US troops will be deployed to foreign conflict-zones. Indeed, there would surely be little to sustain the considerable political and media reference to the Vietnam Syndrome if those concerns were *not* significant *and* palpable within the American population. However, to suggest that any President wishing to use military force inevitably finds himself facing a national storm of public opposition is simply fatuous. There is, in fact, little to suggest that post-Vietnam America has remained broadly tethered to a timid anti-militarist mindset. Since the end of the Second World War, significant numbers of Americans have continued to believe that their country *should* play a leading role in world affairs and, significantly, that it should use its military power to do so if

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[58] Andrew Kohut, 'Post-Cold War Attitudes towards the Use of Force', in H. W. Brands, (ed.), (2000), *The Use of Force After the Cold War*, Texas A & M University Press, College Station, pp. 171-172.

necessary.[59] The Vietnam experience has *not* eradicated that view. Whilst the numerous military interventions of the post-Vietnam years betray the extent to which successive generations of Washington *policymakers* have demonstrated a willingness to use military force, it is fair to conclude that *all* of these deployments have been supported by at least some sections of the American public-political arena.[60] The 'obstacle' of an unsupportive public may thus not always present itself to the White House as it prepares to send US forces overseas.

It is in fact fair to say that *deployment-advocacy* has been a significant feature of the politics of military intervention in the United States. As was discussed in the previous chapter, public support amongst Americans for US military action evidenced itself throughout both the Cold War *and* the post-Cold War periods. During the 1990s, with the Western media relaying harrowing pictures of humanitarian disasters from conflict-zones around the world, Jens Stilhoff Sörensen notes that significant sections of America mirrored other Western publics in *urging their government to use military force* in order to enforce and uphold 'universal civic values' in foreign conflicts where civilians were being targeted by the protagonists.[61]

Richard Sobel, whilst acknowledging that the American public has been inconsistent in its views on, and support of, military intervention, contends that public opinion may have the ability to exact a considerable influence on US military interventions. He contends that whilst it may not actually 'set' policy, the public can certainly 'set the parameters within which the political leadership may act' and have a major impact upon the constancy and duration of any force deployment.[62] It has been observed, for example, that the impact of public opinion can be especially significant

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[59] James. M. Lindsay, 'Cowards, Beliefs and Structures. Congress and the Use of Force', in H. W. Brands, (ed.) (2000), p. 151.
[60] Bacevich (2005), p. 34.
[61] Stilhoff Sörensen (2002), p. 2.
[62] Sobel (2001), pp. 42-47; quote at p. 45.

at certain points of the presidential election cycle. Presidents may be especially mindful of their domestic ratings during their first term in office, concerned that any reckless overseas adventurism may have a detrimental impact upon their re-election chances. This implies, of course, that second-term Presidents – since they do not need to worry about re-election – may conceivably be bolder in responding to foreign conflicts, perhaps more likely to sanction the deployment of US forces. If this were true, it would assign a considerable significance to domestic opinion and its ability to influence – even constrain – a President's foreign policy.

Regardless the point in the electoral cycle, Melvin Small observes that Presidents *do* typically invest considerable time and effort in publicly justifying, defending and commending their deployment decisions to the American public-political arena. Their consistent willingness to do so, Small contends, is undeniable evidence that they are very much aware of the 'prying free press, the requirement to stand for re-election, and the need to obtain popular endorsement for foreign policies'.[63]

The memoirs of James Baker, George H. W. Bush's Secretary of State, offer just one example in support of this contention. Describing the Bush administration's response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Baker paints a picture of a Bush administration which was extremely frustrated over its inability to win public support for the deployment of US forces to the Persian Gulf. This failure was not down to any lack of effort on the administration's part. On the contrary, Baker notes that it was well aware that it was suffering domestically because of its failure to adequately justify this response to the American public and that it stepped up its efforts to make the case. However, Baker acknowledges that whilst the administration employed

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[63] Small (1996), pp. xiii &xix.

'words carefully chosen for their impact', it was unable to rally America behind Presidents Bush's actions.[64] Baker's candid recollections suggest that the White House does indeed take the winning of public support for military interventions very seriously indeed.

The media and public opinion: influential...but *not* decisive

It seems clear that Presidents are very mindful of media commentary *and* of public opinion. It also seems that they are prepared to go to considerable lengths in order to 'win' the battle to garner favourable 'press' and to convince Americans over their deployment decisions. However, it is also the case that they are quite prepared to proceed with their deployment plans even if they are not successful in winning this public diplomatic 'battle'. As was the case with Congress, it seems that whilst the media and public opinion are undoubtedly considerable factors in these processes, it is doubtful whether these domestic constituencies really do play a substantial role in influencing *whether or not the President will actually decide to deploy US forces*. Despite the Vietnam Syndrome, the President's deployment decisions are *not* tethered to the 'domestic mood' and what it seems to opine, vis-à-vis a given crisis.

Robert DiPrizio is just one commentator who takes this view. Rejecting the idea that a CNN effect stimulates the White House to take deployment decisions which it would not have otherwise, his analyses of Washington's responses to the recent conflicts in Northern Iraq, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo have led him to conclude that the significant actions taken by the White House in relation

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[64] James A. Baker (1995), *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace 1989-1992*, New York, Putnam, p. 334-337.

to these conflicts largely *pre-empted* supposedly critical periods of media coverage, and were *not* a response to it.[65] He contends that the most likely effect of media pressure is the 'speeding up of the decision-making process'.[66] Jonathan Mermin also articulates scepticism over the media's ability to impact significantly upon the deployment of US forces. He asserts that the American media typically 'does not offer critical analysis of White House decisions unless actors inside the government (most often in Congress) have done so first.' Rather than bringing an independent and critical presence to deployment debates, Mermin contends that American journalists consistently *surrender* their status as critical constructors of opinion and agenda, instead settling for letting 'actors inside the government set the terms and boundaries of foreign policy debate'.[67] Given, as has already been noted, the executive branch's assumption of its dominance in this policy area, any such passivity from the media is likely to render it impotent in even influencing the terms of interpretation and debate, let alone actual White House decision-making itself. Indeed, the fact that prolonged, often visceral, television and newspaper coverage of both the Bosnian and Rwandan conflicts were insufficient to prompt Presidents Bush and Clinton to sanction a decisive US military response to these conflicts, goes a long way towards negating the idea that an affective CNN effect prompts unwilling Presidents to order force deployments.

Any notion that public opinion can act as a tangible influence on presidential deployment decisions, also appears to rest upon thin ice. Again, the executive branch's assumption of dominance in this area appears to preclude any contrary outcome. For a start, the public mood is perennially fickle, a fact which has doubtless

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[65] DiPrizio (2002), p. 157-159.
[66] Ibid., p. 157.
[67] Mermin (1999), pp. 4-5, 7 & 143. See also, Murray Edelman (1988), *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, The University of Chicago Press, p. 90.

sustained the view, oft-articulated by elite policymakers, that the public is uninformed and too temperamental to provide any feasible partnership on foreign policy (George Kennan's views, noted earlier, certainly fall into this category).[68] Also, as Jeffrey Record points out, whilst much has been made of the post-Vietnam White House's awareness of the Vietnam Syndrome and a casualty-sensitive American public, when it comes to the crunch of decision-making, the studies and the polls frequently appear to make 'no impression' on the White House; US forces are deployed *if the President sees fit* and once he is committed to this course of action, it is difficult to imagine how domestic opposition might actually prompt the President to halt his deployment plans.[69]

Kenneth Boulding concurs. He depicts the President and his 'inner-circle' as holding all of the cards on this issue and contends that it is the preconceptions and wishes of key decision-makers which, in terms of significance to the key decisions, far outweigh those of 'the masses'.[70] Jonathan Mermin suggests that whilst a growing media omnipresence purportedly strengthens the intimacy of the people-politics-governance relationship, and certainly *does* place policymakers and policymaking under more public scrutiny than ever before, it remains the case that most of public-political challenges to White House deployment decision-making are merely *reactive* to actions *already proposed or taken by key policymakers*.

The authoritativeness typically displayed by Presidents in this area also has significant implications for the suggestion that the timing of the presidential election

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[68] See Steven Kull & I.M. Destler (1999), Misreading the Public. The Myth of a New Isolationism, Brookings Institution Press; also, Steven Kull, 'Public Attitudes Towards Multilateralism', in S. Patrick & S. Forman (eds.) (2002), *Multilateralism & US Foreign Policy. Ambivalent Engagement*, Lynne Rienner Publications. Quote on p. 115; Kennan (1951), p. 94.

[69] Record (2002), p. 143-144.

[70] Kenneth E. Boulding, 'National Images and International Systems'. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 3, No. 2, June 1959. Also, Boulding (1956), *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*. University of Michigan Press; Edelman (1988), pp. 97 & 106; C.B. MacPherson, 'Participatory Democracy', in David Held et al. (1985), *States and Societies*. Open University, Blackwell Publishing, p. 576.

cycle may play a crucial factor in a President's deployment-advocacy. Even a first-term President may feel little constrained by a negative public mood – he may, for example, feel that so early into his time in office, he has plenty of time to turn around any negative opinion which the deployment in question may foment.[71] More broadly speaking, since Presidents invariably view themselves as enjoying the monopoly of authority in this area anyway, their own views are overwhelmingly likely to eclipse the views of journalists and the wider public as they deliberate force deployments. For example, a President may feel that deploying US forces to a foreign crisis is the only morally responsible thing to do for the President of the United States and the self-styled leader of the 'free world'. If the President does indeed feel this, it may not matter whether the American media or public actually share the President's willingness to deploy; it may also not matter whether that President is in his first or second term. Furthermore, given that Congress invariably rallies to support US force deployments anyway, a President may feel that this congressional shift may ultimately take an unsupportive American public with it.

As is the case with Congress, the public mood is nearly always at the forefront of White House force deployment considerations. However, this does not inevitably endow this mood with any definite input into the key deployment decisions themselves. It is safe to assume that Presidents genuinely *want* to make popular and sound decisions on the use of US forces. It should be remembered that the President is as much a concerned American citizen as his loftiest opponent on this issue. Whilst the responsibilities of his office will doubtless give him a distinct perspective on any given foreign conflict and its significance to the United States, the President is likely to be *at least* as concerned as domestic deployment-opponents about the

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[71] Of course, if a US military operation is a success and is relatively bloodless (at least to US service personnel), the President may see his domestic standing boosted considerably.

consequences of deploying of US troops to that conflict because it is he who bears the moral and political responsibility for any such deployment.

It is these presidential responsibilities which make the difference. Presidents clearly want to make *popular* decisions. However, they demonstrate an understandable disinclination to compromise national security, their own instincts, or the opinions of their favoured policy aides, just to avoid a dip in the opinion polls or the wrath of Congress – especially when there is every chance that they will ultimately manage to garner a broad swathe of public-political support behind a force deployment, regardless the initial unpopularity of the deployment announcement. Charged with the responsibility of both steering and protecting the United States, and well aware of his status as the sole 'gatekeeper' to any use of US military forces, it is little surprise that it is what the President personally thinks is the 'right' thing to do, which is typically the crucial factor in deciding whether or not US forces are deployed. It is also unsurprising that if a President sees the need to take this decision, he will do so, regardless the domestic mood.

The Vietnam experience may well have changed America's views on the use of military force. The Vietnam Syndrome may well have placed extras pressures on any President wishing to sanction this course of action. However, the responsibilities of leading the United States have changed little since the Vietnam years and when it comes to taking deployment decisions, Presidents still look to 'do the right thing'. This sometimes means sanctioning the military option, regardless the apparent domestic unpopularity of this recourse.[72]

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[72] Chaim Kauffman, 'See no Evil. Why America Doesn't Stop Genocide', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, July/August 2002, p. 144; Power (2002), p. 294; Sobel (2001), p. 185; Halberstam (2001), p. 358.

Conclusion

The Congress, the American media and public opinion have been popularly viewed as having the ability to effectively influence White House foreign policy decision-making. These factors have often been depicted as catalysts to the participative democratic process by both mirroring and broadcasting America's concerns over US force deployments. As national vehicles for the expression of the Vietnam Syndrome, it is notionally feasible to bestow a constitutionally-empowered Congress and – perhaps to a lesser degree – the media and public opinion with the ability to significantly influence the way in which the White House will respond to a foreign war. This chapter has drawn attention to many reasons why the influence of these three constituencies is far more limited that it might initially appear and how it is in fact the White House which has continued to dominate post-Vietnam deployment decision-making.

This is certainly *not* to depict a marginal role for all of the domestic actors considered in this chapter. He may well be 'chief among many' on the issue of deploying US forces, and he may command broad respect by virtue of his office, but Presidents are unwise to ignore or dismiss Americans' concerns on this issue.[73] Any President knows that he risks floundering if he fails to guard against 'a relentless combination of global events, CNN film crews and syndicated journalists'. In short, any lazy reliance upon the powers inherent in their office is, successive Presidents have understood, very risky indeed.[74]

However, in deciding the 'best' response to any given foreign conflict, Presidents (assisted by their civilian and military advisors) have to consider an array

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[73] Clifford in Hogan & Paterson (2004), p. 93; Nye (1986), p. 114.
[74] Clarke (1993), p. 54.

of issues and concerns which legislators and journalists simply do not. The President is personally responsible for defending and upholding various national interests and if he deems a foreign crisis sufficiently grave to merit US military involvement, then he will likely view congressional, media and public criticism as something to be assuaged or endured, but *not* as something which might alter his chosen policy decisions. At the same time, however, it is unsurprising to note that the post-Vietnam White House *has* shared with the wider American polity the post-Vietnam obsession with avoiding military casualties and intractable military commitments. This has been vividly evident in White House deployment planning. For all that they frequently take deployment decisions which appear to depart from the domestic mood, Presidents' aspirations for their force deployments – that they are as quick, bloodless and successful as possible – vividly reflect those of the vast majority of Americans. America's concerns about the United States becoming involved in 'another Vietnam' are thus never enough to stop a willing President from deploying US forces if he sees fit to do so. However, if a President *does* see fit to use military force, these Vietnam-fears will likely dominate the prerequisites and parameters he sets for the deployment.

These assertions are vividly reflected in the next three chapters, which detail how the White House responded to conflicts in Lebanon, Kuwait and Bosnia Herzegovina. In all three of the crises examined in these chapters, presidential administrations grappled with the events and complications of the conflict in question, frequently disagreeing as to what the most prudent course of action was. In these 'inner-circle' wrangles, presidential preference persistently decided the course of action. Amidst these policy deliberations, the American public-political arena was rife with criticism and deployment-opposition, with reference to the Vietnam experience dominating the debates. Indeed, in all three instances, the Vietnam

Syndrome had a considerable influence upon both the deployment decisions *and* on the attendant debates and commentary.

What is clear is that when Presidents *have* taken the decision to commit US forces, these decisions have been decisive and final. Congressional efforts to either influence the decision-making process *or* to actually derail the President's deployment plans have been largely unsuccessful. Despite the Vietnam and Watergate experiences, the President's imperiousness on the issue of deploying US military forces has remained largely unchanged in the post-Vietnam era.

Chapter 4

Waging War on the Vietnam Syndrome:

The Reagan Administration and the Lebanese Conflict, 1982-1984

The first of the three case studies focuses upon a President who, perhaps more than any other, committed himself to dispelling the Vietnam Syndrome – Ronald Reagan. This case study illuminates not just the difficulties that President Reagan had in achieving this mission; it also shows that during the Cold War, White House efforts to dispel Vietnam's shadows were not just confined to episodes when it was trying to win domestic support for force deployments. The Cold War standoff defined the Reagan presidency and if he could justifiably be credited with pushing the United States to ultimate victory over the Soviet Union – the so-called 'Reagan victory' thesis – then this 'victory' might well be seen to have its roots in Reagan's efforts to drag America out of its post-Vietnam nadir.[1] Convinced that the United States had been greatly weakened by the Vietnam experience, Reagan sought to rejuvenate the nation and disperse Vietnam's shadows as soon as he took office.

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[1] Dumbrell (1997), pp. 36-37.

President Reagan, Vietnam and the use of military force

Reagan assumed office in January 1981, on a self-professed mission to change America's fortunes. During the 1980 presidential campaign, he had repeatedly criticised both Presidents Ford and Carter for being weak in their foreign policymaking and he won office on the promise of change. Placing a bold foreign policy at the very heart of his presidential vision, Reagan's 'peace from strength' mantra was based upon the conviction that only a significantly bolstered American military would deter any Soviet aggression towards the United States, thus reducing the likelihood of military confrontation between the two superpowers.[2]

One of Reagan's first goals as President was to re-strengthen the relationship between the White House and the Pentagon and to overturn the Pentagon's post-Vietnam hesitance in supporting a bolder projection of US power on the world stage. At their very first meeting, Reagan's Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger told the Joint Chiefs of Staff that their first task was to 'close the window of vulnerability' to the Soviet threat; Reagan sanctioned an extra $33 billion to the Pentagon's annual spending budget in order to help it in this task.[3]

If Reagan was more than willing to provide the financial means for his national rejuvenation project, he was also willing to do what was required to get Americans to support that project. As far as Reagan was concerned, eradicating the Vietnam Syndrome would go a long way towards achieving this. He felt that the nation's confidence had been effectively deadened by the Vietnam experience and that America's position as leader of the free world would continue to be threatened as

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[2] Ted Gest, 'Foreign Policy: The Main Area', *US News & World Report*, 3rd November, 1980, p. 62; Janda, Berry & Goldman (2008), p. 632.
[3] Hedrick Smith, 'The National Mood', *New York Times*, 29th May, 1981; Herspring (2005), pp. 268-269; Neu (2000), p. 21.

long as Americans were tied to fears that their country might become embroiled in 'another Vietnam'.[4] With his administration peopled by individuals who, like himself, had 'an obsession' with shaking off the Vietnam Syndrome, the Reagan White House was thus committed to dispelling Americans' fears.[5] The United States, Reagan declared more that once, had lived with the Vietnam Syndrome for too long.[6]

Reagan's charisma and strident rhetoric certainly had confidence-boosting appeal for many Americans, and provided a welcome contrast to the mood of the late Carter presidency when significant numbers of Americans thought that their country was 'on the wrong track'; the new President's 'politics of hope' seemed, to many Americans, to cut through the post-Vietnam gloom.[7] Reagan himself certainly thought so. In a speech to West Point graduates in May of 1981, just four months into his presidency, he pointed to both the American public's 'spiritual revival' and a 'bipartisan patriotic mood in Congress' as proof that the Vietnam Syndrome had been 'swept away'.[8]

However, Reagan soon found that his optimistic appraisal of the national mindset was not entirely accurate. Not every American shared his bullish perspective; on the contrary, his self-proclaimed willingness to reassert America's military supremacy on the world stage created concerns in many domestic quarters. Indeed, these apprehensions had evidenced themselves even before Reagan took office. During his presidential race against Jimmy Carter, the *US News and World Report* had concernedly drawn attention to the fact that Reagan had 'publicly raised

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[4] McKrisken (2003), p. 105.
[5] Halliday (1984), p. 220.
[6] James Reston Jr. (1984), *Sherman's March and Vietnam*, New York, pp. 263-264; Neu (2000), p. 21.
[7] Hedrick Smith, 'The National Mood', *New York Times*, 29th May, 1981; Robert Dallek (1984), *Ronald Reagan. The Politics of Symbolism*, Harvard University Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp. 56-57.
[8] Howard Raines, 'Reagan Vows US Will Press Efforts To Build Defenses'. *New York Times*, 28th May 1981; Hedrick Smith, 'The National Mood', *New York Times*, 29th May, 1981.

the possibility of military action at least nine times in the last 12 years in response to crises', including suggesting a blockade of Cuba as a response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.[9]

Thus, once in office, and despite opinion polls depicting a more buoyant national mood, there were significant concerns over where the new administration's foreign policy aspirations might lead the United States. The Cold War definitely grew colder in the first few years of the Reagan presidency and many Americans felt this chill keenly, their anxieties nourished in no small part by the administration's frequent reference to the use of military force. In May 1981, for example, Reagan's Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger stated that the United States must be prepared to engage in wars 'of any size and shape and in any region where we have vital interests.'[10] His Secretary of State Alexander Haig, a noted Vietnam 'hawk', had notoriously complained of America's opposition to anything military in the post-Vietnam years.[11] Reagan's continuing, almost obsessive, interest in South and Central America also gave many Americans a troubling sense of *déjà vu*. With the *New York Times* criticising his 'macho' stance on foreign policy issues, some wondered whether US soldiers might once again find themselves fighting jungle warfare in a foreign conflict which appeared to have little relevance to the American people. [12]

America's wavering attitude towards US force deployments was thus still very much to the fore, despite the generally upbeat national mood. Scepticism over the Reagan foreign policy was little helped by those actions which Reagan *did* see fit to sanction. The Reagan administration frequently failed, in Joseph Nye's words, to

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[9] Ted Gest, 'Foreign Policy: The Main Area', *US News & World Report*, 3rd November, 1980, p. 62.
[10] Weinberger quoted in *New York Times*, 6th May 1981, cited in Klare (1982) , p. 11.
[11] Dallek (1984), p. 136.
[12] Howard Raines, 'Reagan Vows US Will Press Efforts To Build Defenses', *New York Times*, 28th May 1981; 'Why the Talk of Another Vietnam?' *US News & World Report*, 9th March, 1981, p. 9; Hedrick Smith, 'The National Mood', *New York Times*, 29th May, 1981; Small (1996), p.141; Janda, Berry & Goldman (2008), p. 632.

'develop a capacity for strategic formulation' in their foreign policy endeavours.[13] Other commentators offer a more robust interpretation; John Dumbrell, for example, notes that the Reagan administration's foreign policy ventures were 'often ramshackle'.[14] This case study very much confirms these interpretations. Reagan's zealous exceptionalist vision for his presidency certainly did not always manifest itself in a studied, well-defined approach to using military force. Indeed, concerns over these perceived flaws were being espoused from within the Department of Defence early on in his presidency and would be justified by the way in which Reagan responded to his very first major foreign policy crisis, Israel's invasion of Lebanon, on 6th June, 1982.[15]

In response to the invasion and the degenerating situation inside his country, Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel requested international assistance. This request prompted President Reagan to deploy US Marines to Lebanon, as part of a UN-mandated multinational force (MNF) which also included French and Italian troops.[16] In ordering this deployment, however, it was clear that despite his 'anti-Syndrome' mind-set, Reagan was certainly not above America's post-Vietnam conflict-sensitivities. Indeed, for all bullishness, he was very much aware of the impact that military recklessness might have in aggravating these fears. The deployment that he stipulated very much reflected this. Modest in both size and scope, it little reflected the conservative 'overwhelming force' doctrine he had repeatedly advocated.[17] Regardless the deployment's minimalism, however, the Vietnam Syndrome was very evident in how the American public-political arena responded to it. The MNF

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[13] Nye (1986), p. 125.
[14] Dumbrell (1997), p. 37.
[15] Herspring (2005), p. 295; Kelly (1996), pp. 2 & 4.
[16] Weinberger (1990), p. 104; George Schultz (1993), *Turmoil and Triumph*, New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 108-109.
[17] Neu (2000), p. 4.

mission – to oversee the evacuation of militants representing the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) from Beirut – was widely condemned by American political and media critics as a vaguely defined and open-ended commitment. Indeed, these criticisms were evident even within Reagan's own 'inner-circle' of key foreign policy advisors; the MNF deployment caused substantial rifts between the State and Defence Departments as practitioners from each institution differed over the wisdom of sending US troops into an urban war-zone with a vaguely-defined mandate.

These tensions escalated further when, with the MNF having successfully supervised the PLO withdrawal and then having been withdrawn from Lebanon, President Reagan (along with his French and Italian counterparts) agreed to *re-deploy* the MNF back into Lebanon at the request of the Lebanese government, in order to assist Lebanese government forces in regaining control as hostilities continued to grip the country.

America's fears and criticisms over seeing American troops operating inside Lebanon were soon vividly realised. US forces were in Lebanon for well over a year and ultimately found themselves sucked into a hostile and complicated conflict which would severely dent Reagan's efforts to put the Vietnam experience behind America. The experience also galvanised a scepticism within much of Washington's political-military establishment over American involvement in peacekeeping operations, a prejudice which would linger well into the post-Cold War era.[18]

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[18] Author interview with General George Joulwan, US Army (retired). Arlington, Virginia, May 11th 2006.

Conflict in Lebanon – an overview

The background to Lebanon's complicated conflict was essentially down to two key factors: firstly, Lebanon was home to a complex array of religious and political antagonisms; secondly, the threat that some of the factions within Lebanon posed to Israel invited sporadic retaliatory strikes and incursions from Israeli forces. Since at least the time of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Lebanon had become a surrogate homeland to around 400,000 Palestinians who had fled in the aftermath of the conflict. These figures increased in 1970, when large numbers of PLO fighters were ejected from Jordan at the behest of King Hussain. Residing in huge refugee camps in and around Beirut, Palestinians controlled the economics, policing and politics of the camp areas, which stretched into both the Beqaa Valley and Southern Lebanon. Palestinians thus had what was, for some commentators, almost a 'state within a state' inside Lebanon. In the words of one Reagan official, the PLO had 'hijacked' the country.[19]

Palestinian militias were soon protagonists in spiralling violence inside Lebanon, fighting not only with Lebanese government forces over control of areas of Lebanon itself but also mounting frequent attacks against targets inside Israel.[20] In 1976, amidst escalating hostilities between Lebanese Muslim and Christian groups and Palestinians, around 30,000 Syrian troops were deployed into Lebanon as a 'deterrent' force, under a mandate from the Arab League. However, Damascus had its own intentions for Lebanon. It viewed the country very much as a sphere of

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[19] Author interview with former State Department official Dr William Schneider Jr. Washington DC, 10th May, 2006; John H. Kelly (1996), 'Lebanon 1982-1984' in J. R. Azrael & E. A. Payin (eds.) (1996), *US and Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force*. Rand Institution Publications, chapter 6, p. 2.

[20] Kelly (1996), p. 2.

Syrian influence (Lebanon and Syria had been one political entity during the Ottoman Empire) and it firmly rejected Lebanon's Christian political base. Syria's presence merely poured oil onto Lebanon's flames; Syrian forces would subsequently engage in hostilities not only against Lebanese Christian factions, but also against Palestinian forces as well. To further add to the muddled composition of this conflict, both Syrian *and* Palestinian forces would use locations in Southern Lebanon as a base for military strikes against their sworn enemy, Israel.[21]

American involvement in Lebanon

Washington's response to Israel's June 1982 invasion was not the first time that US forces had seen action inside Lebanon. On 15th July 1958, as Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arab nationalism sparked anti-Western uprisings across the Middle Eastern region, President Eisenhower ordered US troops into Lebanon at the behest of its pro-Western President, Camille Chamoun. Lebanon had been beset by considerable tensions and riots for around two months or so when, on 14th July 1958, pro-Nasser forces overthrew the pro-Western Hashemite monarchy in Iraq. Greatly concerned, the Eisenhower administration agreed that deploying US troops into Lebanon offered the best chance of achieving three key goals: firstly, it would help to maintain the stability of Chamoun's government in Beirut; secondly, the impact of moving US forces into Lebanon might serve to slow the spreading influence of Nasser's pan-Arabism which, it was feared, might engulf the entire Middle East; thirdly, the

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[21] Kelly (1996), p.2; Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), pp. 291-293; Ronald Reagan (1990), *An American Life*, Pocket Books, pp. 409-410; William L. Chaze, Dennis Mullin, Joseph P. Shapiro & Douglas Watson, 'In Lebanon To Stay?' *US News & World Report*, 26th September, 1983, p. 26; 'Israel and the PLO: 7 Years of Strife', *New York Times*, 8th June, 1982.

deployment of US forces would send a message that Washington was prepared to take military action even if that meant confronting the Soviet Union, which had backed Nasser. Despite domestic concerns over the deployment, the US mission in Lebanon was both short and successful. With just one US combat death, the mission was described by some observers as 'Eisenhower's finest hour'.[22]

Twenty four years on, Eisenhower's Lebanon mission was still viewed as a model intervention by many in Washington and may well have boosted a readiness to deploy US forces back into that country. However, Reagan's interest in the crisis was undoubtedly rooted in more contemporary concerns. He was supportive of an aspiration in Washington that Lebanon might be amenable to an American assistance programme that Fred Lawson has termed 'Jordanization'. The notional aim of this programme was to repeat in Lebanon what Washington had done in Jordan during the 1950s; namely, to help develop a stable regime which was able to handle 'both its Palestinian population and its own radical and dissident factions', and which was willing to work with Washington in pursuing America's own aims in the region.[23]

Predictably, Israel's plight was also central to Reagan's interest in the Lebanese crisis. Israel was viewed from Washington as an island of America-friendly democracy in the region. The Carter administration had overseen the negotiating of the Camp David Accords in 1978, where Israel and Egypt had signed a peace treaty which formally ended their thirty-year war. Reagan had openly expressed his desire to build upon Carter's achievement, declaring that he wanted to create 'more Egypts' in the Middle East in order to dissipate the hostility which Israel constantly felt from

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[22] Western (2005), pp. 62, 66, 72, 89-90.

[23] George C. Wilson & John M. Gosko, 'US Planning to Rebuild Armed Forces of Lebanon', *The Washington Post*, 28th October, 1982; Fred Lawson, 'The Reagan Administration in the Middle East', *MERIP Reports*, No. 128, 'The Deadly Connection: Reagan and the Middle East', November-December 1984, p. 32.

its environs.[24] Reagan also saw considerable Cold War value in negotiating a broader Middle East peace; as his first Secretary of State Alexander Haig put it, America could only benefit if it could 'persuade the Arabs that they have more to fear from Moscow than they do from Jerusalem.'[25]

Cold War concerns also came into play where Syria's role in Lebanon was concerned. Notwithstanding its open hostility towards Israel, Syria was viewed from Washington as a virtual 'Soviet satellite' in the Middle East. On a formal diplomatic level, Moscow and Damascus had signed a twenty-year friendship treaty, in which Moscow pledged itself to aid Syria if required.[26] There was also thought to be around 5,000 Russian 'military advisors' operating inside Syria and Moscow continued to provide Damascus with both money and arms. Indeed, Moscow's sponsorship of Syria was the reason that Syria was able to offer itself as a credible military force at all during this period. Having suffered considerable losses (in aircraft and other military materiel) when Israeli forces invaded Southern Lebanon in 1978, Syrian forces only managed to sustain the levels of military activity they subsequently did – both inside Lebanon and in striking against Israel itself – because Moscow had re-supplied Damascus with 'high-end' military equipment. Fearful that a Soviet-backed Syria might fill any power vacuum created by Lebanon's conflict, Syria's presence in Lebanon was thus a notable concern in Washington.[27]

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[24] Reagan (1990), p. 424.
[25] Haig cited in *Newsweek*, 4th May, 1981, p. 22; Dallek (1984), pp. 171-172.
[26] 'Lebanon Crisis a New Test for Reagan', *US News & World Report*, 25th May, 1981, p. 11; Reagan (1990), p. 409.
[27] Author interview with former State Department official Dr William Schneider Jr. Washington DC, 10th May, 2006

A critical escalation

Under considerable American pressure, Israel withdrew the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) from Southern Lebanon, in June 1978. It was replaced by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). With a mandate to 'restore international peace and security and assist the Lebanese Government in restoring its effective authority in the area', UNIFIL occupied Southern Lebanon's 'buffer zone' between the Israel-Lebanon border and the Litani river [28] However, UNIFIL's mandate proved to be well beyond its capabilities. Despite President Reagan's efforts to bring American diplomatic authority to bear on the conflict (in April 1981, he persuaded the former Under-Secretary of State Philip Habib to come out of retirement in order to act as America's special envoy to the region and negotiate a peace), tensions in Lebanon came to a head in June of 1982.[29]

On 4th June, Israel's ambassador to Britain, Shiomo Argov, was shot and seriously wounded in London. Blaming the PLO, and pointing to continuing attacks from missile batteries in Southern Lebanon, Israel launched air-strikes against PLO positions in Beirut the very next day, killing 45 and wounding 150.[30] Then, on 6th June, the Israelis launched *Operation Peace for Galilee*, a massive three-pronged invasion into Lebanon itself.[31] However, rather than merely occupying Southern Lebanon in order to re-establish a defensive 'buffer zone', as Israel had indicated it

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[28] Kelly (1996), p. 2; Nora Boustany, 'Palestinians Pledge to Attack in Response', *The Washington Post*, 5th June, 1982; 'Israel and the PLO: 7 Years of Strife', *New York Times*, 8th June, 1982. See also, the United Nations' UNIFIL website (1st April 2008) at: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unifil/index.html

[29] 'Israel and the PLO: 7 Years of Strife', *New York Times.*

[30] Kelly (1996), pp. 2 & 4; William Claiborne, 'Raid is in Retaliation for Shooting Envoy', *The Washington Post,* 5th June, 1982; 'Israel and the PLO: 7 Years of Strife', *New York Times*, 8th June, 1982.

[31] Kelly (1996), pp. 2 & 4; 'Key Events Listed in Lebanon Conflict', *Los Angeles Times*, 4th August, 1982.

would do, the IDF pushed all the way to Beirut itself with the clear intention of eradicating the PLO base in the city.[32]

The international community condemned the invasion. The UN invoked Resolutions 508 and 509, demanding both a cease-fire *and* a withdrawal of Israeli forces. These demands were stridently rejected by Israel's UN delegate Yehuda Blum, who stated that Israel faced 'intolerable provocation' from terrorists operating inside a lawless state.[33] Despite the international pressure, the Israeli government maintained its obstinacy. Now holding military control of almost half of Lebanon, and reluctant to compromise his position of strength, the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin made it clear to a disgruntled President Reagan that he was prepared to continue relying upon Israel's military dominance – and *not* Philip Habib's diplomatic efforts – in order to influence the direction Lebanon would take when it emerged from the current war. Adopting this stance was, Begin argued, vital, given the hope in Jerusalem that the 'new' Lebanon would be prepared to commit to peace with Israel.[34] This bold Israeli stance brought Lebanon's hostilities to boiling point. With Iran airlifting several thousand of its troops into neighbouring Syria, ongoing battles between Syrian and Israeli forces, and Israel pushing to completely seal off Beirut and trap the thousands of PLO fighters based there, Lebanese delegates at the UN talked openly of 'an all-out Middle East war.'[35]

As the siege of Beirut continued throughout June, Philip Habib's frantic shuttle diplomacy between Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem finally bore fruit.

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[32] Ibid; Ball (1984), p. 7.
[33] 'Key Events Listed in Lebanon Conflict', *Los Angeles Times*, 4th August, 1982; Bernard D. Nossiter, 'UN Council Asks Israeli Pullback', *New York Times*, 7th June, 1982.
[34] Walter A. Taylor, 'US Tightrope in the Middle East', *US News & World Report*, 5th July, 1982, pp. 1-3; Record (2002), p. 82; Reagan (1990), pp. 423-424 & 427.
[35] Frank J. Prial, 'General Assembly Meeting is Sought by Some Delegates', *New York Times*, 10th June, 1982; 'Key Events Listed in Lebanon Conflict', *Los Angeles Times*; Bernard D. Nossiter, 'UN Council Asks Israeli Pullback', *New York Times*, 7th June, 1982.

President Reagan's envoy secured a force withdrawal commitment from both Israel and Syria, this commitment dependent upon PLO forces first being evacuated from Beirut. Once the PLO left Beirut, Begin pledged that he would withdraw the IDF, a commitment which was matched by the Syrian government.[36] Predictably, however, there were notable preconditions; Israel refused to accept a UN force overseeing the evacuation process, resentful at what it saw as the one-sided nature of the criticism emanating from the UN over its invasion (Israeli disdain for the UN was evident on the ground within the conflict-zone, with the IDF limiting the movements of UNIFIL units in Southern Lebanon).[37] Aware of Jerusalem's view, and eager to force through Habib's peace initiative and remove the warring parties from Lebanese soil, the Lebanese cabinet itself officially requested (Habib having cemented agreement over this request with Israeli and Palestinian leaders) that the American, French and the Italian governments provide a 2000-strong international multinational force (MNF) to oversee the withdrawal.[38]

Direct American involvement

George Ball has described how the American government 'reluctantly' agreed to send a contingent of US Marines as part of the MNF. However, if there was reluctance in Washington over this deployment – and, as will be discussed, there most certainly was – it is doubtful whether it was particularly evident in President Reagan.[39] Reagan

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[36] Reagan (1990), pp. 412 & 430.
[37] Jonathan Spivak, 'Israel Relaxes its Conditions Involving PLO', *Wall Street Journal*, 16th August, 1982; Ball (1984), pp. 7 & 9; Herspring (2005), p. 278.
[38] Loren Jenkins, 'Lebanese Leader Predicts PLO to Start Leaving by End of Week', *The Washington Post*, 17th August, 1982.
[39] Ball (1984), pp. 7-8.

was eager to sanction a fuller American engagement with the crisis and he was more than willing to overlook the strident reservations of some of his 'inner circle' in ordering it.

The MNF force tasked with overseeing the PLO withdrawal plan comprised 800 American, 800 French and 400 Italian troops. Its mandate was simple; namely, to ensure the conditions of Lebanon's peace agreement by interposing itself between the warring factions and supervising the evacuation of around 12,000 PLO and Syrian fighters from Beirut, over a period of 30 days.[40] However, whilst the plan seemed straightforward enough, the mission was immediately criticised from some quarters in Washington as being 'a vague and open-ended mandate for committing American military personnel'.[41] Significantly, the MNF deployment was not even wholly supported within the Reagan administration itself. Despite its professed need to speak with one voice on foreign policy issues, disagreement emerged between the State and Defence Departments, headed by George Schultz and Caspar Weinberger, respectively.[42]

From the onset of the crisis, Weinberger had closed ranks with a military establishment which had welcomed Reagan's self-declared admiration for the US military but which also maintained a prudent wariness of what it perceived to be an impulsive, unstructured approach to policy.[43] The Defence Secretary shared the Pentagon's reluctance to use US forces for 'peripheral' or 'symbolic' political tasks, viewing such utility as diverting the military's focus and strength from addressing its proper task; prevailing over the Soviet Union. From this perspective, the MNF

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[40] Loren Jenkins, 'US Envoy Flies To Israel to Seek Final Beirut Pact', *The Washington Post*, 15th August, 1982; Loren Jenkins, 'Lebanese Leader Predicts PLO to Start Leaving by End of Week', *The Washington Post*, 17th August, 1982.
[41] Kelly (1996), p. 5.
[42] McKrisken (2003), p. 91.
[43] Herspring (2005), pp. 268-269.

deployment appeared to be an unnecessary risk. However, the State Department took a different view. State officials saw the crisis as requiring 'the intermixture of diplomacy and the military', and viewed an American military presence as something which would add considerable leverage to the peace process.[44] The State Department's willingness for US military involvement in the crisis, evident in both Alexander Haig (who resigned in late June of 1982) and his successor George Schultz, would continue to conflict with the Pentagon's opposition and would preclude administration consensus over Reagan's Lebanon policy.

However, the absence of inter-department consensus did little to change the President's commitment. Reagan's preference was that the MNF *would* proceed and that US forces *would* be involved; Pentagon concerns were acknowledged by Reagan but presidential prerogative won the day.[45] In seeking to placate the Pentagon's concerns over the mission, Reagan merely assured Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) General John Vessey (who had openly expressed his concerns over the deployment to the President) that US troops would not be caught up in hostilities and that the deployment time-frame would be strictly limited to thirty days.[46]

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[44] Weinberger (1990), pp. 110-111.
[45] Author interview with former State Department official Dr William Schneider Jr. Washington DC, 10th May, 2006. Also, Reagan (1990), pp. 360-362; McKrisken (2003), p. 91; Record (2002), pp. 81 & 82
[46] Herspring (2005), pp. 278-279.

The view from Capitol Hill

On Capitol Hill, reaction to the deployment was mixed. For some legislators, the deployment of US troops was an acceptable response to Israeli aggression – there was a broad sense amongst representatives that a more forceful White House stance was necessary in order to stop Israel's 'relentless attacks' on Lebanon and to force an IDF withdrawal.[47] Whilst it had the previous year sanctioned $1.4 billion in military aid and $785 million in economic assistance to Israel for each of the next two years, there was a distinct feeling on Capitol Hill that the White House should, in the words of one representative, find 'some way to slap Israel's wrist…to demonstrate that what's good for Israel is not necessarily best for the US.'[48] Predictably, however, there was also palpable opposition to the Reagan commitment. Washington's Israeli lobby protested the need for any such stance and drew attention to the fact that Israeli towns were constantly being attacked from Southern Lebanon.

Significantly, even those congressional representatives who *were* willing to see Washington rebuke Israel were not necessarily willing to see this rebuke manifest itself in the deployment of US troops to the region. With concerns quickly circulating about the fate that might await those troops, it was not long before the subject of US military casualties began infusing domestic speculation and commentary on the crisis. The American media was quick to report the comments of the Israeli opposition leader Shimon Peres, who publicly warned of the 'Vietnamization' of the war in Lebanon; sceptics seized upon this warning and speculated that the crisis might end in a 'bloody impasse.'[49] The *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* also reported

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[47] Don Oberdorfer & John M. Goshko, 'Peace-Keeping Force', *The Washington Post*, 7th July, 1982.
[48] Walter A. Taylor, 'US Tightrope in the Middle East', *US News & World Report*, 5th July, 1982, pp. 1-3
[49] Flora Lewis, 'To Break the Deadlock', *New York Times*, 3rd August, 1982.

growing congressional unease over 'the dangers of US casualties and prolonged involvement' in the crisis. Whilst some representatives expressed their opposition directly to the President himself, others in both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee expressed their concerns publicly, warning that 'the commitment of US troops meant the acceptance of possible casualties'.[50]

The White House quickly sought to allay such fears and to convince Americans of the necessity, brevity, and safety of the mission. The day after the deployment proposal was announced, Reagan personally telephoned some 'key members' of Congress 'to smooth the way for the proposal', whilst Deputy Press Secretary Larry Speakes told a press conference that the President regarded America's presence in the region as 'an essential linchpin' of any Middle East settlement. Mindful of the grumblings on Capitol Hill, Speakes emphasised also that President Reagan would fully observe the requirements of the War Powers Act by formally notifying and working with Congress on the deployment. However, in a telling precursor to the executive-legislative disharmony which would quickly unfold over the crisis, Speakes qualified this pledge by declaring that the War Powers Act was not actually significant in this instance since US forces were *not* going to be involved in 'hostilities' in Lebanon. Whilst this assertion prompted critics to muse how the White House could possibly be so sure about what awaited US troops in war-torn Beirut, President Reagan himself reiterated the point as he sought to allay congressional fears over the Marines' role in Lebanon. He assured Congress that US troops would play 'an important but carefully limited non-combat role' and stressed that 'our agreement with the government of Lebanon expressly rules out any combat responsibilities for

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[50] Don Oberdorfer & John M. Goshko, 'Peace-Keeping Force', *The Washington Post*, 7th July, 1982; 'Congressmen Voice Unease on Sending US Troops to Beirut', *Los Angeles Times*, 20th August, 1982.

the US forces'. He added that American troops would not enter Lebanon until all the warring factions had agreed to the disengagement plan.[51]

Despite the assurances, Reagan also reminded legislators of his authority as Commander-in-Chief. He denied any need to specify which part of the War Powers Act had empowered him to sanction the Marine deployment, asserting instead that he was acting 'pursuant to the president's constitutional authority with respect to the conduct of foreign relations and as commander-in-chief of the armed forces.'[52] It marked the beginning of what would be a protracted struggle over the MNF deployment between the White House and Capitol Hill.

US Marines arrive in Lebanon

On 25th August 1982, the first of 800 US Marines began arriving in Beirut to oversee the PLO evacuation. Not finding themselves in the heated cross-fire that some pessimists had predicted, the evacuation proceeded so smoothly that a still-edgy Pentagon pushed to have the Marines withdrawn ahead of schedule. Whilst some Reagan administration officials protested a premature withdrawal, Reagan assented to the Pentagon's request. On 10th September, far earlier than their mandate had specified, American MNF Marines were redeployed to ships moored off the Lebanese coast.[53] Within just 10 days, however, Reagan would be announcing the redeployment of the Marines back into Beirut, amidst spiralling violence in the city and increasing tensions back home in Washington DC.

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[51] Ibid; Don Oberdorfer, 'President Orders Marines to Beirut', *The Washington Post*, 21st August, 1982.
[52] George C. Wilson, 'Reagan Assures Congress Marines Will Avoid Combat', *The Washington Post*, 26th August, 1982.
[53] Herspring (2005), pp. 279-280; Murtha (2006), pp. 34-35.

Reagan's hopes that the PLO evacuation would mark a successful end to Lebanon's hostilities were cruelly dashed. On 14th September 1982, the Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel was assassinated. His brother, Amin Gemayel, was quickly elected President. Shortly after the assassination, the IDF entered West Beirut in force, clearly abandoning its commitment to withdraw from Lebanon. This incursion prompted Syria to renege on its own commitment to withdraw its forces, thus ensuring that the two major warring parties remained in the conflict-zone. Then, between 16th and 18th September, the IDF sent up flares to assist Christian Phalangist militias as they massacred nearly 1,000 Palestinians residing in Beirut's Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps. The slaughter sparked international condemnation and prompted President Gemayel to request the immediate redeployment of the MNF, asking that it remain in Beirut until Lebanese government forces were in a position to secure the capital.[54]

Back in Washington, these events were viewed with a sense of disbelief. President Reagan was horrified at the refugee camp massacres. He felt himself personally implicated in the atrocity, given that his special envoy Philip Habib had promised the PLO during negotiations both that Israeli forces would not re-enter Beirut *and* that remaining Palestinians would be safe from harm.[55] Reagan's feelings were shared by many within his administration and there was a broad feeling that it was the premature MNF withdrawal which had failed the Palestinians. Secretary of State George Schultz summed up this mood in just a few short words: 'The brutal fact is', he told a colleague, 'we are partially responsible.'[56]

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[54] Herspring (2005), p. 279; John M. Goshko, 'US Considers Return of Marines to Lebanon', *The Washington Post*, 20th September, 1982.
[55] Trudy Rubin, 'Reagan Mideast plan in Lebanon Quagmire', *Christian Science Monitor*, 1st September 1983; Weinberger (1990), p. 104.
[56] Schultz (1993), p. 105.

The events in Lebanon further nourished the frictions between the State and Defence Departments about America's role in the crisis. The deteriorating situation in the light of the MNF withdrawal was viewed by some senior State officials as a stark vindication of their wish for an assertive US military presence in Beirut, and a sobering demonstration of how the Pentagon's post-Vietnam timidity could compromise US foreign policy. Schultz – who, along with Deputy National Security Advisor (NSA) Robert 'Bud' McFarlane, had criticised the Pentagon-driven decision to withdraw prematurely as 'criminally irresponsible' – now urged Reagan to accept President Gemayel's invitation to redeploy the MNF back into Lebanon. McFarlane and some of his NSC colleagues even pushed to bolster the MNF by several divisions, and to extend its mandate to one of actually *forcing* a Syrian and Israeli withdrawal from Beirut. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and Defence Secretary Weinberger vehemently opposed this idea.[57] However, arguing that it was the early departure of the MNF which had allowed the violence to spiral in the first place, and that it was very much in America's interest to have a say in what happened in Lebanon, McFarlane and Schultz 'won' the argument over redeploying the MNF. With the French and Italian governments both expressing a willingness to re-deploy their troops in the wake of the massacre, President Reagan agreed that the MNF should be reformed and that US Marines *would* play a central role.[58]

As before, the Joint Chiefs and the Defence Secretary vigorously opposed US involvement in the MNF. They argued that the sheer intimacy of the fighting, the many factions involved, and the fact that many of these factions would view US troops as the enemy, made it almost impossible for Washington to exert any fruitful influence inside Lebanon without getting involved in war-fighting operations.

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[57] Ibid; Kelly (1996), p. 6; Herspring (2005), p. 279; Weinberger (1990), p. 105.
[58] John M. Goshko, 'US Considers Return of Marines to Lebanon', *The Washington Post*, 20th September, 1982; Kelly (1996), p. 6.

Providing an American 'presence', Weinberger reiterated once more, was insufficient grounds to deploy US forces. Furthermore, he argued that if US troops really *were* to help the Lebanese government regain control, then they would need to number far more than the 1,200 which were to be deployed. Senior Pentagon officials had recommended that anything between 5,000 and 20,000 US troops would be required for such a task.[59]

President Reagan made his decision. He decided that US forces *would* play a central role in the second MNF operation. However he rejected, once again, State Department calls for the MNF to be significantly beefed-up, deciding instead to stick to the original limited troop numbers. Despite the rumblings of concern reverberating around Washington DC (from both opponents *and* proponents of the venture), the second MNF deployment thus proceeded and did so very much according to Reagan's own stipulations. Despite their importance to the planning process, the President was little swayed by the opposition emanating from the military chiefs; he had been genuinely stung by the refugee camp massacres and he was convinced that sending US troops back into Beirut was the *right* thing to do, regardless the uncertainties and dangers.[60] However, Reagan's rationalising of the mission along these lines did little to change the minds of sceptics within his 'inner-circle'. For Defence Secretary Weinberger, the redeployment of Marines into Lebanon loomed large as 'a nightmare of epic proportions.'[61] Weinberger's gloomy forecast would ultimately be proven correct.

Aware that its divergences over the redeployment decision were commanding media attention, and recognising the need to publicly demonstrate a unified stance on

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[59] Herspring (2005), pp. 279-280; Weinberger (1990), p. 94.
[60] This instance demonstrates how very 'human' moral concerns can often trump strategic or doctrinal considerations, or notions of 'national interest', in prompting Presidents to make decisions on the use of military force.
[61] Herspring (2005), pp. 279-280; Weinberger (1990), p. 94.

policy, the Reagan administration now started upon what would be a protracted effort to garner broad public-political support for the second MNF mission. So concerned was Reagan with making a convincing public case for it that on 20th September 1982, the day he announced it on American television, he spent the morning with the National Security Planning Group (NSPG) working on how to tell the nation that US Marines were going back into Lebanon's hostilities.[62]

Reagan announced the redeployment from the Oval Office at 5 pm that evening.[63] In his statement, he told Americans that US Marines were to return to Lebanon, along with their French and Italian counterparts, and that this second MNF mission would only be for 'a limited period of time.' The mission was simple, the President stated; to enable the Lebanese government 'to resume full authority over its capital.'[64] The President's message indicated a straightforward and limited mission, one which would not take very long. To many, however, the redeployment was a decision, and a mission, over which the shadows of Vietnam loomed large.

Back into the fire: US Marines are redeployed to Lebanon

The decision to deploy the MNF into Beirut for the second time received – as had the first deployment – a mixed reception in domestic political and media circles. Support for the mission was increasingly evident on Capitol Hill as more details emerged of Israel's part in the massacre of Palestinian civilians. Senators even discussed cutting

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[62] Reagan (1990), p. 438.
[63] Weinberger (1990), p. 104.
[64] Reagan quoted from *Weekly Compilation of White House Documents*, 27th September 1982, pp. 1182-1184, cited in Kelly (1996).

Washington's multibillion dollar foreign and economic aid package to Jerusalem.[65] However, there were also considerable fears over the safety of the Marines and, as *The Washington Post* reported, concerns on Capitol Hill were 'not along partisan lines'. Congressmen variously expressed fears that US forces were 'going into the fire' and that America was getting involved 'in the middle of a civil war' in a place 'where revenge, revenge, revenge is the order of the day.' 'There's a sense that we're getting into a quagmire', Senator Paul Tsongas (Dem. MA) told reporters. 'How are we going to get those troops out again, once they go in?'[66]

The White House quickly rallied to allay quagmire-fears, intra-administration disagreements over the deployment seemingly dispelled. Defence Secretary Weinberger publicly assured Americans that US forces would only go ashore into Beirut 'under conditions for a peaceful mission' whilst President Reagan insisted that the Marines were being sent into a situation in which they had a 'definite understanding as to what they're supposed to do', and that they would depart as soon as their limited task had been accomplished.[67]

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[65] Margot Hornblower, 'Hill Gives Troop Plan Mixed Review', *The Washington Post*, 21st September, 1982.
[66] John M. Goshko, 'US Marines Sail; Timetable of Tour Still Is Undecided', *The Washington Post*, 22nd September, 1982.
[67] Rudy Abramson, 'Weinberger Stresses Safety for Marines', *Los Angeles Times*, 22nd September, 1982.

Vietnam radars start to buzz

Despite the White House's assurances, the subject of Vietnam was featured prominently in Washington's debates over the redeployment. In the week leading up to the Marines' landing in Beirut, all three of the administration's key figures had faced public questions about the relevance of the Vietnam experience. In an interview on 26th September, Defence Secretary Weinberger was asked about the 'agitation' the re-deployment had caused on Capitol Hill, and about whether 'anxiety' over the mission was down to the 'Vietnam quagmire fixation'. Weinberger replied that whilst 'that Syndrome will probably be with us for a very long time', the difference between then and now was that administration 'did not have the understanding of the American people' during Vietnam. The mistakes of Vietnam, he asserted, would not be repeated by the Reagan administration over Lebanon.[68] Secretary of State George Schultz faced similar questions. In a subsequent television interview, he was asked:

> During the deliberations on sending the Marines back, did any of you – you yourself perhaps – have the feeling that you were getting on a slippery slope? Did any memories of Vietnam come to mind? [69]

Like Weinberger, Schultz rejected the appropriateness of the Vietnam analogy, replying that he didn't think that the current crisis had 'any analogous aspect of Vietnam at all'.[70] President Reagan himself faced similar questions. In a White House press conference on 28th September, having announced that US troops would

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[68] 'An interview with Caspar Weinberger', *The Washington Post*, 26th September, 1982.
[69] Schultz quoted in the Department of State *Bulletin*, November 1982, pp. 42-43, cited in Kelly (1996), p. 6.
[70] Ibid.

land in Beirut the next morning, Reagan was asked how long the Marines would have to stay in Lebanon for. He replied that there was 'no way to judge'. He was then asked if he feared 'that the United States could be dragged into a long, Vietnam-like entanglement there [in Lebanon]'. 'No', he responded, 'I don't see anything of that kind taking place at all.' [71]

Vietnam was not the only subject which was stymieing the White House's efforts to foment broad domestic support for the MNF deployment. It was not long before the War Powers Act also became a bone of contention. Whilst the early news from Beirut was very positive – the arrival of the MNF had paved the way for relative order and the re-opening of roads which had not been opened for nearly a decade; President Gemayel buoyantly declared that 'Beirut has again become the capital city of all Lebanon' – this news was largely overshadowed by the beginnings of what *The Washington Post* termed 'a battle' between the White House and Congress over whether War Powers legislation should be brought to bear on the Lebanon deployment.[72] This 'battle' was given a vigorous jolt when, on 30th September, one Marine was killed and three others were injured in an explosion.[73] Pointing to these first casualties, and the 'chaotic situation' of 'war-ravaged Lebanon', congressional critics argued that the American force in Lebanon was now clearly involved in 'hostilities' and should thus come under the authority of War Powers legislation which would allow Congress to negotiate a time-frame for the mission.[74] Declaring that an open-ended deployment 'could be tragic beyond even the pain of US casualties', Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Clement Zablocki

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[71] Michael Getler, 'Length of Their Stay Left Open by Reagan', *The Washington Post*, 29th September, 1982.
[72] David Ottaway, 'US Marine Killed, 3 Hurt in Beirut Blast', *The Washington Post*, 1st October, 1982.
[73] Reagan (1990), p. 439.
[74] David Shribman, 'New Questions Arise Over War Act', *New York Times*, 1st October, 1982.

(Dem. WI) criticised Reagan's 'skirting of the War Powers Act' and declared that this ignoring of Congress was 'eroding the integrity of the law'. Reagan's commitment could, Zablocki argued, see the United States 'unilaterally stumbling into a possibly intractable…military involvement.'[75]

Those first US casualties also generated criticism in the media. A *Washington Post* editorial censured the White House for launching the second MNF mission with 'too little public or congressional discussion'. 'The concept of "quagmire"', the article stated, 'is still for many Americans a controlling metaphor, an automatic reflex against foreign risk-taking'.[76] Similarly, the *Chicago Tribune* discussed whether there was a 'Vietnam analogy' in its reporting of the Marine casualties and reported that the State Department was stridently denying accusations that US forces were getting involved in a 'foreign entanglement'.[77] The growing tensions between the White House and Capitol Hill over the applicability of War Powers Resolutions also captured media attention and fuelled concerns over the nature, and rationales, of the MNF mission itself. Declaring on its front-page 'Confusion Surrounds Timetable for Mission', the *New York Times* observed that 'conflicting statements' were coming from the White House over the timeframe for the troops' withdrawal and reported that Caspar Weinberger was once again expressing fears that American forces 'might get drawn into an extended commitment and maybe into combat as well'. This public acknowledgement of Weinberger's concerns was another clear sign that the Reagan administration's disharmony over the mission was no secret, despite its efforts to maintain a unified front.[78]

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[75] Clement J. Zablocki, 'Reagan Is Skirting the War Powers Act', *The Washington Post*, 3rd October, 1982.
[76] 'Sending the Marines'. *The Washington Post*, 3rd October, 1982.
[77] Storer Rowley, 'Marines apt to stay for a few months', *Chicago Tribune*, 3rd October, 1982.
[78] Leslie H. Gelb, 'The Marines in Lebanon', *New York Times*, 29th September, 1982.

A minor, but instructive, altercation between Paris and Washington over the MNF mission fuelled suspicions that what the Reagan administration was telling America about the aims of the deployment was not necessarily accurate. Whilst President Reagan had publicly designated a very limited mission mandate for US MNF troops (he had described them as an 'interposition force', a vague concept in itself), the French government's public declaration that the MNF mission was actually one of 'maintaining peace and protecting the civil population' sparked a transatlantic argument and increased domestic concerns back in the United States. Eager to downplay the suggestion that US troops were charged with any such responsibility (publicly, Reagan had given no hint whatsoever that US Marines would be tasked with actively *maintaining* peace), the Pentagon vigorously denied Paris's interpretation, asserting instead that 'the MNF is not a force to maintain peace' but merely 'a deterrent force'.[79] A somewhat embarrassing public *contretemps* between allies, this confusion fed fears in Washington that America's role and mission in Lebanon remained worryingly unclear, an ambiguousness resonant of that which had drawn the United States into Vietnam.

Escalating hostilities in Lebanon; escalating American involvement as well?

Even as domestic concerns grew over the MNF's role in Lebanon, Reagan increased American involvement in the crisis. Having hosted President Gemayel in Washington in October, Reagan agreed to send artillery pieces and armoured personnel carriers to the Lebanese government, payment for this equipment coming from a $500 million

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[79] Kelly (1996), pp. 3 & 7.

fund that the Gemayel government had set aside for arms purchases from the United States. Concurring with President Gemayel's assertion that the continuing presence of the MNF was the only way of guaranteeing an Israeli and Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, Reagan decided to send a US military advisory group to Lebanon to oversee the training of Lebanese forces. He also agreed to consider Gemayel's suggestion that the MNF itself should be supplemented, a move which key figures in the State Department had been advocating for quite some time.[80]

Americans' concerns over the rising commitment to Lebanon were spurred in no small part by the continuing discrepancies emanating from the White House over the rationales for this commitment. In response to growing domestic criticism, the White House sought to make a stronger case for the mission, in order to win over the growing number of doubters. It did not appear to be very successful in achieving this. In one notable public statement, Reagan invoked Cold War imperatives as a justification for the US presence in Lebanon, declaring that the MNF deployment was aimed at stopping the Middle East 'being incorporated into the Soviet bloc'. Given how the White House had reacted to the recent French depiction of the MNF role, this latest statement was perhaps surprising since it depicted a far graver role for US troops in Lebanon.[81] Indeed it spurred concerns in Washington, in direct contrast to what Reagan had intended. In a subsequent letter to the President, a concerned Senate Foreign Relations Committee stated that it expected to be consulted if the White House wanted to keep US troops in Beirut. Public statements from influential congressmen – that there was 'slowly escalating violence' in Lebanon and that Beirut was a 'war-ravaged capital' – also served notice to the White House that Capitol Hill

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[80] George C. Wilson & John M. Gosko, 'US Planning to Rebuild Armed Forces of Lebanon', *The Washington Post*, 28th October, 1982; Lawson (1984), p. 32.
[81] 'Murtha Asks Fast Marine Return', *The Washington Post*, 7th November, 1982; Lawson (1984), p. 32.

was still pushing for the enactment of the War Powers Resolutions. Indeed by now, some legislators were advocating a full withdrawal of US forces.[82]

These political and media concerns also appeared to be reflected in domestic opinion polls. Throughout October of 1982, polls indicated that only 54% of Americans supported an 'active' American part in world affairs. This was the lowest level of support in decades, lower even than in the aftermath of America's withdrawal from Vietnam itself.[83] With some of Reagan's top foreign policy aides openly blaming the public mood on the Vietnam Syndrome, White House officials admitted that they were 'working furiously' on a public campaign to win over public and congressional support for the MNF deployment.[84] For all this effort, however, both the Lebanon mission *and* President Reagan's project to eradicate the Vietnam Syndrome now started to unravel.

Increasing tensions over War Powers; when are hostilities 'imminent'?

As anxieties increased in Washington, it was not just events in the Middle East which were stirring the Vietnam Syndrome. Even as disgruntlement increased over US involvement in Lebanon, political and media critics were raising concerns over Reagan's continuing focus upon Central America and were warning that the United States risked being propelled towards another Vietnam-style quagmire. On 28th April 1983, the Commission on US-Central American Relations took a full-page advert in

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[82] Ibid.
[83] For the poll, see: Michael Getler, 'Failure to Persuade Public Seen Jeopardizing Plan', *The Washington Post*, 30th November, 1982.
[84] Poll cited in Sobel (2001), pp. 46-47. See also figures in: 'Washington Whispers', *US News & World Report*, 11th October, 1982, p. 20.

the *New York Times* urging Congress to 'Veto Another Vietnam'.[85] With the MNF in Beirut suffering further casualties, Reagan's Lebanon policy then suffered yet another serious blow.[86] Citing the continuing hostilities in Lebanon, and Syria's continuing military threat, Jerusalem announced that it would keep the IDF in Lebanon for the foreseeable future, in order to protect Israel's northern border.[87] This decision was significant since it guaranteed that there would be no Syrian withdrawal either. With no apparent end to the political stalemate, and with the warring factions still concentrated firmly in and around Beirut, a dismayed Reagan noted that Israel's decision left his Middle East peace initiative 'in limbo.'[88]

If this development somewhat soured diplomatic relations between Washington and Jerusalem, American-Israeli relations on the ground inside Lebanon were also becoming strained. These tensions were evidenced in a series of flashpoints between US and IDF troops. One notable, and widely reported, incident even saw a US Marine Captain drawing his sidearm in order to warn off an IDF tank unit which was attempting to encroach upon an American-held position. 'Continued provocation' from Israeli forces prompted the Commander of the US Marine Corps, General Robert H. Barrow, to write a personal letter of protest to Defence Secretary Weinberger, on 14th March 1983.[89] It was a measure of the intimate volatility of the crisis that US forces found themselves in altercations with their erstwhile ally.

Back in Washington, tensions were also continuing to escalate. The White House's continuing insistence that US forces were not involved in 'hostilities' in Beirut – in order to deflect ongoing congressional demands that the US mission

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[85] 'Will Congress Make The Same Mistake Again?' *New York Times*, 28th April, 1983.
[86] Murtha (2006), pp. 40-41.
[87] Trudy Rubin, 'Reagan Mideast plan in Lebanon Quagmire', *Christian Science Monitor*, 1st September 1983.
[88] Reagan (1990), pp. 441-442.
[89] A transcript of this letter is available on the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* website (accessed 1st July 2008) at: http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/040483/830404006b.html

should be brought under War Powers authority – appeared increasingly implausible. Despite the fact that US forces were officially designated as being part of an impartial multinational interposition force in Beirut, it was clear that Lebanese Muslims, Syrians and Palestinians did not hold this view. Indeed, the United States was viewed by these factions – just as Defence Secretary Weinberger had predicted – as both a friend and protector of Israel *and* of the Lebanese Christian militias which were receiving weapons and funding from Israel.[90] The contempt felt for the US military presence was made startlingly clear on 18th April, 1983, when a bomb at the American Embassy in West Beirut killed 17 Americans and several foreign nationals. It was the Marines' biggest setback of the deployment thus far and prompted a more muscular approach to how US military operations were conducted.[91] The Marines subsequently increased their firepower and started using helicopter gunships for 'defensive operations' when they were on patrol.[92]

Greatly concerned by the increasing violence, Secretary of State George Schultz himself travelled to the region in an effort to reinvigorate the peace negotiations. Yet again, however, American aspirations for the crisis were thwarted by the aspirations of the protagonists. Having managed to negotiate a tentative preliminary withdrawal commitment from Israel, Schultz's efforts were then dashed when Damascus announced that it would *not* sanction a simultaneous withdrawal of its own forces.[93] Syria's decision meant that there would be no Israeli withdrawal either, thus ensuring a continuation of Lebanon's increasingly violent stalemate.

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[90] Reagan (1990), p. 442; Kelly (1996), pp. 3 & 7.
[91] Weinberger (1990), p. 107; Reagan (1990), p. 443.
[92] Murtha (2006), p. 41.
[93] Reagan (1990), pp. 443-444.

From peacekeepers to protagonists

Throughout the summer of 1983, the intensity of the fighting between rival Lebanese Christian, Muslim and Druze militias saw MNF troops based at Beirut airport coming under increasing fire.[94] The White House did not need the *Washington Post* declaring that the Vietnam Syndrome was 'at work' to be aware of growing domestic concerns over these developments, or of the subject which was now dominating Washington's debates over the US mission.[95] In heated debates on Capitol Hill, legislators of both parties argued passionately over bringing President Reagan to account over the Lebanon deployment; Senator Toby Roth (Rep. WI) asserted that Lebanon was 'a quagmire…a tragedy waiting to happen', whilst Senator Dale Bumpers (Dem. AR) pleaded for 'no more Vietnams, no more undeclared wars, no more presidential wars'.[96]

Reagan went on the public offensive in the face of such criticisms, warning congressional dissenters that their protestations were not only undermining America's Lebanon policy but also giving 'aid and comfort' to Moscow. However, within the White House itself, the deployment was increasingly being talked about in similarly fateful terms. The *New York Times* quoted one White House official who described Lebanon as 'a Greek tragedy' and that 'we're in a terrible, terrible situation.'[97] President Reagan himself was also more than aware of the increasing seriousness of events. Despite his bold public stance he harboured grave private concerns, increasingly convinced that US forces were – despite his initial intentions – now

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[94] Ibid., pp. 444-445.
[95] Philip Geyelin, 'A Desert Doesn't Look Like a Quagmire', *Washington Post,* 14th August 1983; Reagan (1990), p. 444.
[96] Mike Shanahan, 'Senate Approves War Powers Bill', *Boston Globe*, 29th September, 1983; Kelly (1996), pp. 9-19; Reagan (1990), p. 451.
[97] Steven R. Weisman, 'Reagan Rides the Crest of an Anti-Soviet Wave', *New York Times*, 25th September, 1983.

firmly embroiled in Lebanon's war. As two more Marines were killed at the end of September, Reagan noted in his diary that 'this civil war is running wild'.[98]

This period, and President Reagan's growing disillusionment with it, marked a significant turning point in America's Lebanon policy. Throughout the late summer, increasingly frustrated, Reagan had been toying with the idea of bringing US naval and air power to bear against Syrian and PLO forces which were stepping up attacks against Lebanese government forces. On 7th September 1982, he noted in his diary:

> I can't get the idea out of my head that some F-14's off the *Eisenhower* [a US aircraft carrier moored off the Lebanese coast] coming in at about 200 feet over the Marines and blowing hell out of a couple of artillery placements would be a tonic for the Marines and at the same time deliver a message to those gun happy Middle East terrorists.[99]

Reagan's sentiments hardly seem to be a detached, strategic justification for such a significant escalation of US policy. However, they vividly reflected his personal frustration at the ongoing stalemate and the toll it was taking on the United States; the day before this diary entry, Reagan had personally telephoned the parents of two US Marines who had recently been killed in Beirut.[100]

The very next day, in a watershed moment for American involvement in the conflict, President Reagan ordered US artillery and warships to begin firing on Syrian-backed Lebanese Druze positions around Beirut. Having given this order, Reagan now wrestled with the dilemma of whether or not to continue with this forceful new strategy. In deliberating the options, he was torn between wanting to fulfil his commitment to aid the Lebanese government, and uncertainty that America's

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[98] Reagan (1990), p. 445.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

'aid' should extend to actually conducting aerial and sea bombardments. Having consulted with his MNF partners on this issue, Reagan concluded that adopting this more aggressive approach was the only way of pushing back the Syrian offensive. By the end of that month, US warships and F-14 jets were pounding positions on the hills overlooking Beirut, in support of Lebanese government forces. This escalation may have been 'under the head of defence', as President Reagan contended, but it was a classic example of the 'mission creep' that the Pentagon had feared and it ended any semblance of American neutrality in the conflict.[101]

Reagan's decisions would have serious repercussions for the MNF troops on the ground inside Beirut. Knowing that they were being targeted by US ships and planes, Druze forces now began firing upon US troops based at Beirut airport. Very soon, as John Murtha notes, 'US Marines were hunkered down at the airport under fire from the surrounding hills', their military effectiveness still compromised by the restricted rules-of-engagement which had not been revised since the very start of the mission.[102]

War Powers agreement in Washington - the shedding of the Vietnam Syndrome?

Reagan's decision to escalate America's military involvement in the crisis coincided with a similarly dramatic change in his attitude towards congressional involvement in his Lebanon policy. With the *New York Times* reporting 'no end in sight to the fighting in Lebanon', the crisis was now the number one issue on Capitol Hill.[103]

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[101] Ibid., pp. 445-446.
[102] Murtha (2006), pp. 41-42.
[103] Steven R. Weisman, 'Reagan Rides the Crest of an Anti-Soviet Wave', *New York Times*, 25th September, 1983.

Well aware of growing public opposition to US involvement – Reagan lamented that there is 'a deeply buried isolationist sentiment within our land' – but convinced that he needed to maintain a strong US military presence in Lebanon, Reagan now turned to Congress in order to provide much-needed support for his Lebanon policy. Reagan hoped that, having demanded it for so long, Congress would agree to bring the US Lebanon mission under the War Powers Act. Not only, he reasoned, would this appease the grumblings of Lebanon sceptics if they saw Congress effectively endorsing the mission; he also thought that a formal congressional endorsement under the War Powers provisions 'would settle their [the Marines'] presence in Lebanon' and thus allow his planners to focus upon a sounder strategy for the MNF.[104]

Reagan's wishes were met. After vigorous consultation with senior legislators, the year-long wrangle over enacting War Powers provisions for the Lebanon mission finally ended, on 20th September 1983.[105] Reagan agreed to a resolution invoking section 4 (a) (1) of the War Powers Act. In response, congressional leaders agreed to impose an 18-month time-frame on the Marines' Lebanon deployment, as requested by the White House. The Resolution passed in both Houses.[106]

From the congressional perspective, the conciliatory shift was largely due to two key factors: firstly, a growing realism amongst senior legislators that President Reagan could not feasibly back-pedal from his commitment to an international peace-keeping mission at this critical juncture; secondly, that continuing legislative obstinacy risked compromising both the President *and* the mission itself. Whilst there was by no means a majority swing behind the Lebanon deployment, there now

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[104] Reagan (1990), pp. 446-447.
[105] Steven R. Weisman, 'Reagan Rides the Crest of an Anti-Soviet Wave', *New York Times*, 25th September, 1983.
[106] Grimmett, 1st March, 2007, p. 16; Reagan (1990), p. 446.

seemed to be a broad consensus on Capitol Hill that – against the backdrop of an ongoing Cold War standoff – American credibility was at stake in Lebanon and that the White House could not withdraw US forces just because the situation was getting more dangerous. The bipartisan nature of this recognition was encapsulated by the Democratic Speaker of the House, Thomas 'Tip' O'Neill (Dem. MA), when he told reporters that the United States 'Can't cut and run…The people of the world will lose faith and confidence and credence in our government.'[107]

From the White House perspective, the 'concession' to bring the mission under War Powers agreement was a considerable boon. Not only did it give President Reagan the flexibility to extend the US military presence in Lebanon, if he saw fit; it also made Congress complicit in a mission which it had been increasingly criticising. Now, having tacitly endorsed it, Congress had little grounds to criticise the Lebanon mission, thus ensuring that a significant swathe of the deployment-opposition Reagan *had* faced was now effectively gone. Indeed, Congress would now likely shoulder some of the responsibility for the mission if things were to go awry.

Reagan officials were thus understandably buoyant about the agreement and they viewed it as yet another opportunity to remind Americans that the Vietnam Syndrome was not longer an impediment to the nation's foreign policy. The 'consensus on Capitol Hill in favour of keeping American troops in a battle zone' was, they proclaimed, a clear indication that Congress was now 'over the Vietnam Syndrome'.[108] Indeed, some legislators drew similar conclusions. Howard Berman (Dem. CA) emphasised the post-Vietnam pertinence of the Lebanon agreement, stating that now was the time to demonstrate that 'Vietnam did not paralyze the

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[107] William L. Chaze, Dennis Mullin, Joseph Shapiro & Douglas Watson, 'In Lebanon to Stay?' *US News & World Report*, 26th September, 1983; Steven R. Weisman, 'Reagan Rides the Crest of an Anti-Soviet Wave', *New York Times*, 25th September, 1983.
[108] Ibid.

United States for all time'. However, Senator Sam Nunn (Dem. GA), who had opposed the agreement, offered a markedly different conclusion:

> What we did in Vietnam, we went in without knowing what we were doing and the mission kept expanding and expanding without sufficient forces to carry it out. The resolution before us is the most clear expression in advance [sic] I've ever seen of a repeat of that mistake. [109]

Responding to Nunn's warning, House Speaker O'Neill rejected any repeat of Vietnam and denied that congressional endorsement of the deployment amounted to a 'blank check' which could 'lead to another Gulf of Tonkin Resolution'. Conversely, he argued, Congress assented to the Bill because it 'clearly limits the scope and role of US forces in Lebanon…so that the danger of a Vietnam-type escalation is avoided.'[110]

However, if the agreement to bring War Powers authority to bear on the Lebanon deployment suggested a growing political consensus in Washington DC, it did little to soothe a broader domestic disquiet which showed no signs of dissipating whilst Lebanon's hostilities continued making front page news. Reagan's domestic foreign policy ratings were, in his own words, 'way down', and with Vietnam continuing to dominate America's Lebanon debates, polling organisations had even started asking Americans if they thought that Lebanon resembled Vietnam – whether it mattered or not, two out of every three Americans polled thought that it did.[111] Criticising the recent War Powers agreement, declaring that it was 'no solution' to the questions over presidential dominance of crisis foreign policymaking, Philip Geyelin

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[109] Mike Shanahan, 'Senate Approves War Powers Bill'; Hedrick Smith, 'A US Turning Point?' *New York Times*, 3rd October, 1983.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Reagan (1990), p. 447.

of *The Washington Post* warned that 'A dangerous delusion is setting in…with the bipartisan compromise, amongst those who think that they have 'laid to rest in Lebanon the Vietnam analogy'. How, the paper asked, can the politicians claim that 'the Vietnam syndrome is behind us' when the American public remain so sceptical?[112]

This period also marked the apex of the Reagan administration's own internal battle over Lebanon policy, with fierce cabinet-level divergences between the State Department and Pentagon over how to respond to the increasing vulnerability of US forces in Lebanon. Arguing that US forces were 'sitting ducks' as they came under increasing sniper and mortar fire at the airport, Secretary of State Schultz advocated a bolder mandate for the Marines, asserting that they should 'not sit at the airport' but 'be used proactively to advance American policy in getting the foreign forces out'. The Pentagon maintained its opposition to these demands. Defence Secretary Weinberger argued that more aggressive US manoeuvring inside Lebanon would inevitably create more casualties and deaths: this would not only escalate domestic opposition to the deployment, he argued; it might also be detrimental to America's relations with neighbouring states in the region. Still looking at the broader picture, and mindful of intelligence rumours which predicted an impending terrorist attack against US Marines in Lebanon, Weinberger continued to advocate nothing less than a full US withdrawal.[113]

Caught between these two perspectives, Reagan was now under intense pressure to retrieve the deteriorating fortunes of the MNF inside Beirut. However, neither of the two main options appealed to him. He was extremely unwilling to withdraw US forces; however, he was equally focussed upon keeping the US

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[112] Philip Geyelin, 'Marines in Lebanon: This Resolution Is No Solution', *The Washington Post*, 11th October, 1983.
[113] Murtha (2006), p. 44.

casualty-count to a minimum and so he ruled out a more expansive mandate for the Marines.[114] As the administration continued to brainstorm for effective alternatives, some harboured grave concerns about how the current policy stalemate might affect the safety of the MNF troops. As far as Reagan's National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane was concerned, the decision to maintain the current force size and mandate cemented not only the MNF's policy 'paralysis' but also the continuing vulnerability of the US Marines at Beirut airport.[115]

Worst fears realised

McFarlane's concerns were realised on the morning of 23rd October, 1983. The US Marine barracks at Beirut International Airport was blown up by a massive truck bomb. The explosion killed 241 Marines; a simultaneous explosion killed 77 soldiers at the French barracks.[116] A devastating setback, it marked the beginning of the end of America's presence in Lebanon. The increasing confusion and disillusionment over America's role in the conflict was not helped by President Reagan's inexplicable public assertion that the bombing proved that the Marine contingent was doing the job it was sent to do in Beirut.[117] It was an assessment highly unlikely to quell Americans' scepticism over a mission which – despite Reagan's initial assertion of

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[114] Author interview with former State Department official Dr William Schneider Jr. Washington DC, 10th May, 2006.
[115] Interview with former NSA Robert C. McFarlane, 'Target America', *Frontline*, 2001. Available on PBS website (accessed 1st February 2008) at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/mcfarlane.html
[116] Reagan (1990), pp. 453-454; Powell (1995), p. 290.
[117] Record (2002), p. 83.

there being 'no intention or expectation that US armed forces will become involved in hostilities' – was now clearly a major urban war-fighting operation.[118]

However, whilst withdrawal demands resonated around Washington DC in the aftermath of the bombing, there remained a strident body of opinion which castigated any US withdrawal as 'creeping cowardice'.[119] For Secretary of State Schultz, the bombing vindicated his calls for a more muscular US policy in Lebanon and demonstrated, albeit at great cost, the futility of trying to maintain a cautious, 'political' military presence in a war-zone. Re-emphasising the logic of the 'overwhelming force' approach, Schultz continued to argue for a strengthened mandate for the MNF. Indeed, such an escalation was discussed at an NSC meeting convened by Reagan shortly after the bombing, in which intelligence supplied by the Pentagon was used to plan attacks against suspected militias in the Beqaa valley. By this time, however, the protestations of Weinberger and the military chiefs were very much in keeping with President Reagan's own view of the crisis and the attacks were aborted. Weinberger pushed instead to start a complete withdrawal of US forces, in the face of stubborn demands from Schultz that the Marines remain in Lebanon, regardless of their mission remit and force size. [120]

The decision at this critical point weighed heavily upon Reagan, who was understandably torn between the merits of each policy option. Stung by the fear that American prestige would suffer if it were to 'cut and run' from Lebanon (and very encouraged in those concerns by some NSC figures), he was equally anxious not to lose any more lives, or to incur any more criticism from an increasingly restless

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[118] David Lamb, 'US Marines Take Control of Beirut Port', *Los Angeles Times*, 26th August, 1982.
[119] Aaron Epstein, 'House Vote Backs Troops in Lebanon', *Philadelphia Enquirer*, 3rd November, 1983; Reagan (1990), 463-465.
[120] James Mann (2004), *Rise Of The Vulcans. The History Of Bush's War Cabinet*, Viking Publishing, p. 118; Interview with former NSA Robert C. McFarlane. 'Target America', *Frontline*, 2001.

domestic arena.[121] Ultimately, Reagan knew that to *increase* American military involvement in the region risked leading America into the very quagmire that opponents of the deployment had warned of from the beginning. If it had not turned into such a quagmire already, staying in Lebanon and sustaining further losses would not only compound the mission failures thus far but, more broadly, would badly damage his mission to dispel the Vietnam Syndrome and bolster America's foreign policy confidence.

Faced with these dilemmas, Reagan concluded that Lebanon's war would continue, regardless of the presence of the MNF. This fact, he knew, effectively left his Lebanon policy – one which was initially based upon US forces overseeing a transition to regional peace – dead in the water. On 7th February 1984, he announced that US Marines were to be withdrawn from Beirut and relocated to American ships waiting offshore. On 30th March, he reported to Congress that America's participation in the MNF was at an end.[122]

Conclusion

The response of the White House to the conflict in Lebanon fits neatly with the characterisation of post-Vietnam American deployment decision-making forwarded by this thesis. President Reagan's Lebanon policy was executed in a manner of his choosing, despite an array of dissenting voices throughout the crisis, and despite the fact that this dissent ensured that the Vietnam Syndrome hung, pall-like, over Washington DC. The exposure of the public-political debates over the Lebanon

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[121] Weinberger (1990), p. 111.
[122] Reagan (1990), p. 465; Grimmett, 1st March, 2007, p. 17.

deployment show that the Vietnam experience provided the dominant theme for both congressional *and* media critics of the mission. It also shows how the Reagan White House sought to publicly respond to this invoking of the Vietnam analogy and how it sought to reassure America over its inappropriateness.

In focussing upon the public diplomacy of the Reagan administration during this period, examples emerged of how strong domestic deployment-opposition can prompt the White House to be both exaggerative and evasive in its rhetoric, in an effort to win over dissenters and diffuse public criticism. Reagan's efforts to emphasise the Cold War imperatives for the US presence in Lebanon may or may not have been exaggerated; however, there seems little doubt that he intentionally downplayed the remit (and thus the potential dangers) of the Marines' mission in Lebanon, something which the public *contretemps* with Paris exposed. The President's interpretive dominance of the crisis was also evident in the way he blocked legislators' demands to enact the War Powers resolutions in order to bring Congress in on the Lebanon mission. When Reagan *did* eventually agree to enact War Powers resolutions, this was done entirely at his own discretion and in accordance with his own wishes.

The domestic opposition to the Marine deployment, and the palpable presence of the Vietnam Syndrome, clearly never dampened Reagan's desire or ability to deploy – and then redeploy for a second time – US forces. However, for all his willingness to circumvent the notional obstacles of the Vietnam Syndrome in order to give the United States a central role in the Lebanese crisis, Reagan appeared to be extremely mindful of the dangers of seeing US forces sucked into a bloody and intractable military mission. On the one hand, it could be argued that for much of the period detailed here, Reagan's decisions could be interpreted as those of a man who

was largely in concurrence with those hawkish 'anti-Syndrome forces' within his administration. On the other hand, however, the parameters that Reagan set for the Lebanon mission actually demonstrated much of the caution advocated by those for whom the Syndrome taught a very different lesson. He repeatedly *refused* to increase the number of US troops in Lebanon and he refused to increase the role and vigour of the Marines' role – escalations in US military action largely evidenced themselves in the 'safe' options of naval and air bombardments. For Reagan, casualty-avoidance was an over-riding concern in steering his decisions.

In the aftermath of the barracks bombings, Reagan rejected State Department proposals to respond punitively to the attack; instead, he sided with a more-cautious Defence Department, ultimately ordering a military withdrawal. Often depicted as a 'classic' Cold War conservative and an ardent champion of the various use-of-force conclusions that the American 'right-wing' had drawn from Vietnam, Reagan was perhaps not as 'anti-Syndrome' as his rhetoric frequently suggested. However, whilst his 'performance' throughout this episode (a performance which saw him flit between not allowing the Vietnam Syndrome to *proscribe* the deployment of US forces, whilst demonstrating much of the use-of-force timidity associated with the Syndrome in the parameters he set for the deployment), one thing was patently clear: *presidential preference dominated*; the deployment, its direction and its duration were decided by the President himself. The nature of this 'dominance' is given a little more consideration below.

Schisms over deploying US troops to Lebanon were notable within Reagan's inner-circle, most notably between the State and Defence Departments. The standoff between the 'hawks' and 'doves' on this issue very much encapsulates America's post-Vietnam divergences over the 'ifs' and 'hows' of using military force. It is

notable (and very much in keeping with the depiction forwarded by this study) that, amidst the policy confrontations between the two departments, presidential preference was the decisive factor. As one senior State Department official subsequently remarked, the policymaking confrontations over Lebanon policy between State and Defence could never be described as having reached a stage of 'policy impasse', since President Reagan's decisions always resolved the issue before any 'impasse' could occur.[123]

Reagan faced direct opposition to the mission from the military chiefs, many of them still bearing the mental scars of the Vietnam experience and adopting the post-Vietnam deployment-caution that has largely come to characterise the Pentagon's mindset throughout the post-Vietnam era. The military chiefs' deployment-reluctance over the Lebanon crisis was perhaps unsurprising given that their fears over Reagan's vague and disjointed foreign policy thinking; these concerns appeared to be crystallised as they talked with their President about the rationales for, and aims of, deploying US troops to Lebanon. In seeking clarity over precisely what the mission was and how it was to be achieved, the chiefs' questions were never answered. As Jeffrey Record observes:

> During and after…the redeployment of US Marines back into Beirut, Reagan and other administration spokesmen cited at least a dozen political objectives [for the mission], some incompatible with each other and others clearly beyond the reach of the intervention forces and their rules of engagement.[124]

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[123] Author interview with former State Department official Dr William Schneider Jr. Washington DC, 10th May, 2006.
[124] Record (2002), p. 83.

The military chiefs may not have believed that Reagan's mixture of American exceptionalism and Cold War bullishness were appropriate motivations for sending US forces into Lebanon. However, this mattered little in the face of their President's wishes and his authority as Commander-in-Chief. As Dale Herspring observes, the Pentagon 'did everything it could within the parameters of military obedience to convince Reagan that the mission was a bad idea'.[125] The President responded by continuing to solicit the advice and opinion of his military chiefs and by acknowledging their experience and expertise. Ultimately however, given that he wanted to deploy, their opinions and concerns *informed* Reagan's view of *how* he would deploy but did *not* persuade him *against* the deployment itself.

Executive dominance was also evident in the White House's dealings with Congress. Whilst Congress demonstrated a generally cautious willingness to support Reagan's deployments – many congressional members wanted the White House to respond to what was broadly seen to be a punitive Israeli incursion into Lebanon – congressional demands for greater executive-legislative co-operation over the MNF mission were, for a long time, given scant attention by Reagan. Indeed, congressional opinion seemed almost irrelevant to his planning. Both decisions to deploy US Marines to Lebanon – the initial MNF deployment *and* the second MNF deployment after the Sabra and Shattila massacres – were done at President Reagan's own discretion and without formal consultation with Congress. Congressional leaders were typically telephoned by administration officials once the White House had ironed out the deployment details with appropriate policymaking officials and other national governments.

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[125] Herspring (2005), p. 278.

Indeed, the possible deployment of US forces was possibly known to actors *out-with* the United States *before* it was known to many congressional members. Reagan gave his special emissary Philip Habib permission to use the President's 'conditional pledge' to deploy US forces as 'a bargaining chip', in the critical round of diplomatic discussions through June and early July of 1982.[126] One could rightly question whether these tense events, and the fraught negotiations which accompanied them, could have allowed anything other than a guarded, non-revelatory engagement on the part of the White House. Nonetheless, whilst this discretion is undoubtedly justified at such times, it also vividly demonstrates that the American public-political arena's involvement in, and awareness of, deployment decision-making is frequently marginal, on a need-to-know basis and *ex post facto*. This marginalisation extends even to Congress, despite its formal empowerments in this all-important policy area.

The executive-legislative 'battle' over enacting War Powers authority also invites attention. The study's focus upon language-use shows that disgruntled legislators consistently criticised President Reagan for his unilateral approach to policy, frequently invoking the Vietnam experience as they did so. Media critics did likewise. In response, Reagan's ability to dictate the terms and implications of the events in Lebanon saw him continue to deny any need for formal congressional involvement through the enactment of the War Powers resolutions. This rejection reached the point where Reagan was – quite incredibly – continuing to deny that Beirut's volatile conflict-zone actually merited the designation 'hostilities', even as American troops were under attack and sustaining casualties. If the 'Imperial Presidency' arises from the power of what Presidents *say* as much as it does from what they can *do* in policy terms, then it is hard to find a clearer example than this.

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[126] Howell Raines, 'Offer By President', *New York Times*, 7th July, 1982.

Of course, President Reagan eventually *did* assent to congressional demands to enact the War Powers resolutions. However, his doing so can hardly be read as an instance of an embattled President succumbing to the will of a strident Congress. Reagan's decision was instead a calculated one, made by a President who saw the sense of tying Congress into a deteriorating mission and ensuring that blame would be shared between the White House *and* Capitol Hill if things were to go awry. In fact, this executive-legislative 'compromise' over enacting the War Powers resolutions did nothing to draw discretionary authority away from the White House. It also did little to increase Capitol Hill's input into the decision-making process. It did, however, formally legitimise Reagan's Lebanon policy in the eyes of much of the American public. Not only did Congress' agreement to extend the deployment timeframe – from the standard 60-90 days to an incredible 18 months – give Reagan a degree of latitude which bordered on the very open-endedness that congressional dissenters were declaring they wanted to avoid; this formal congressional support also effectively 'tied Congress in' to the risks of the mission, making it almost impossible for legislators to publicly criticise a plan that they had formally endorsed. Ultimately, in all of his interactions with the legislature over Lebanon, Reagan never left anyone in doubt that his consultations were instigated *purely at his own discretion and not through obligation*. His willingness to enact War Powers resolutions should not, he reminded Capitol Hill more than once, be viewed as any acknowledgement that the President's constitutional authority can be impermissibly infringed by statute.

President Reagan's deployment decisions also appeared to give scant regard to the concerns of a Vietnam-sensitive American polity. In stewarding Lebanon policy, Reagan pursued chosen policy options and tried, subsequently, to lead opinion on these options. He never really managed to do this effectively and even towards the

end of the Lebanon venture – with escalating American casualties, US warplanes shot down, pilots captured and killed, not to mention the October Marine barracks bombing – Reagan was still receptive to State Department and NSC calls for a more muscular US engagement with the crisis. Reagan's refusal to reject these demands outright suggests that he seriously considered maintaining the US presence in Beirut, a move which he knew would be very unpopular with the American public *and* on Capitol Hill. Americans' negativity towards the deployment ultimately influenced Reagan's decision to cut short the deployment. However, that does not obscure the fact that he had initially sanctioned *two MNF deployments* (and significantly prolonged the duration of the second deployment) in the face of opinion polls which frequently indicated low domestic support for a US presence in Lebanon. As one senior Reagan administration official subsequently admitted: 'For the administration…the importance of public opinion was relatively low. It was not a direct constraint.'[127]

Despite its best efforts, Reagan's 'anti-Syndrome' mission was unsuccessful. After Lebanon, Lawrence Eagleburger, Reagan's Under Secretary of State, confirmed that the American public's enthusiasm remained low for military intervention because there was still 'a lot left of the Vietnam Syndrome, the concern that we will become directly involved militarily and that it's a bottomless pit'.[128] The Lebanon experience was undoubtedly instrumental in fuelling these concerns. Where Reagan failed, however, his successor would try to succeed.

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[127] Sobel (2001), p. 125.
[128] 'The State of Things as Seen From the State', Week in Review, *New York Times*, 22nd April, 1984.

Chapter 5

Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome:

The Bush Administration and Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait, 1990-1991

President Bush, Vietnam and the use of military force

President George H. W. Bush took office in January of 1989, at the very end of the Cold War. He was the fourth post-Vietnam President. Having been Reagan's Vice-President, Bush told Americans when he assumed office that he would carry on with 'the mission we started in 1980'. A significant part of that mission was undoubtedly to dispel the Vietnam Syndrome.[1] During his single term in office, allusion to the Syndrome featured prominently, both in Bush's foreign policy decision-making *and* in his public diplomacy. Indeed, the subject was given unprecedented public exposure in his very first major appearance as President. Incredibly, given that it was a topic whose public 'presence' he viewed – as had his predecessor – as detrimental, Bush actually introduced the subject of Vietnam in his inaugural address:

> Congress, too, has changed in our time. There has grown a certain divisiveness…in which not each other's ideas are challenged, but each other's motives. And our great parties have too often been far apart and untrusting of each other. It has been this way since Vietnam. That war cleaves us still. But, friends, that war began in earnest a quarter of a century ago; and surely the statute of limitations has been reached. This

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[1] Roper (2000), p. 161.

> is a fact: the final lesson of Vietnam is that no great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory. [2]

Bush's allusion to Vietnam might perhaps be viewed as being somewhat disingenuous; he may well have personally lamented the persisting 'presence' of the Vietnam Syndrome but its persistence was surely little helped by his giving the subject a national airing in his first major speech. Whatever the wisdom of this reference, it seemed clear that Bush's commitment to overseeing the Syndrome's demise was, like Reagan's, resolute.[3] Arnold Isaacs contends that the banishing of the Vietnam Syndrome was 'a major administration goal' for the Bush White House, perhaps even as important as winning the war that Bush would eventually order US forces to fight against Iraq.[4]

However, if there were continuities between the Reagan and Bush presidencies, there were also significant differences. Bush was far less the ideologist than Reagan; he was, by his own admission, 'a practical man…not much for the airy and the abstract'.[5] Whereas Reagan's use-of-force initiatives had frequently been underpinned by what almost appeared to be idealistic notions of what America *should* be, and what the leader of the free world *should do* in any given situation, Bush's decisions invariably reflected a far greater knowledge of, and involvement with, the issues in question and were more likely to be grounded in a measured evaluation of event, threat and context.[6] In taking deployment decisions, Bush was far more willing to involve himself in the minutiae of policy than his predecessor had been, and also

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[2] George H. W. Bush, Inaugural Address, January 20th 1989. * NB – unless stated otherwise, all presidential communications can be found (by date & statement title) in the 'public papers' sections of the presidential libraries. For the Bush Library, go to: http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php

[3] At least in the first three years of his presidency.

[4] Isaacs (1997), p. 76.

[5] McCrisken (2003), p. 131.

[6] Record (2002), p. 97; Herspring (2005), p. 298.

more likely to defer military policy to his military commanders rather than to his civilian aides, thus maximising the chance of US victory in the field.[7] As Bush himself acknowledged, more than once, 'I have learned from Vietnam.'[8]

Bush was not the only one in his policymaking 'inner-circle' for whom the Vietnam experience was instructive. His Secretary of State, James Baker, was also very much aware of the lingering Vietnam Syndrome whilst his chief military counsel, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJS) General Colin Powell, was a Vietnam veteran with a very sensitive Vietnam radar of his own. An extremely influential and much-respected figure, Powell would bring much of Caspar Weinberger's use-of-force prudence into the military advice he gave President Bush.[9] In fact, President Bush sometimes viewed Powell's approach as being *overly cautious* as he sought to implement decisive American responses to foreign crises.

Whilst Bush was very much the foreign policy President – he was a former director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) – much of his success in this area was eclipsed by accompanying domestic problems and the fact that he had little in the way of a public persona which might encourage Americans to overlook them. Bush took office to face a divisive partisan domestic political climate underpinned by an economic downturn. Whilst this recession was due in no small part to the huge remilitarisation programme sanctioned by President Reagan – Dale Herspring makes the wry observation that if the US military had been a civilian organisation, it would have been bankrupt by the time Bush took office – America's sizeable budget deficit was not helped by Bush's own costly initiatives, which included a revival of Reagan's expensive missile defence programme and a $400 billion Medicare increase.[10]

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[7] Record (2002), p. 104.
[8] George Bush (1999), *All My Best: My Life in Letters and Other Writings*, New York: Scribner, p. 511.
[9] Record (2002), p. 101.
[10] George Bush & Brent Scowcroft (1998), *A World Transformed*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, p. 380.

America's grim economic plight had a considerable impact upon the Bush presidency; it infused critical commentary on his foreign policymaking and stoked congressional Democratic demands for Bush to cut America's military budget and reap the post-Cold War 'peace-dividend'.[11] Facing near-constant opposition from a Democrat-controlled Congress and Senate, Bush would subsequently admit that the merging of domestic budget politics into his key crisis foreign policy decisions created 'one of the most frustrating periods of my presidency.'[12]

Aside from these budgetary and policy difficulties, Bush's efforts to build domestic support for his policies were not helped by his public presentation. The charismatic Reagan was a very hard act to follow and this worked against Bush when he was trying to rally Americans behind crucial foreign policy initiatives such as force deployments.[13] Bush continued to publicly articulate many of the exceptionalist themes which had underpinned his predecessor's public diplomacy. He also demonstrated that, like Reagan, he was more than willing to exaggerate the reasons for deploying US forces in an effort to dispel the inhibitions of the Vietnam Syndrome and sway Americans behind his deployment decisions. However, he appeared ill-equipped to make a truly persuasive public case for such actions. Bush's many critics castigated his 'extravagant lack of interest in ideas' whilst others argued that his conservative, reactive policymaking style 'tested the patience of much of the American public'.[14] Whilst it clearly had not stopped him being voted into office, the label 'wimp' had dogged Bush's run for the presidency.[15]

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[11] Herspring (2005), p. 297.
[12] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 357.
[13] Ibid, p. 340.
[14] David Mervin (1996), *George Bush and the Guardianship Presidency*, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 33; McCrisken (2003), p. 134.
[15] Roper (2000), pp. 159-160.

Critics may have derided Bush as a wimp but the 41st President of the United States certainly had the fortitude to take the toughest decision of all – using military force. Despite being very much aware of the lingering presence of the Vietnam Syndrome, Bush was – like Reagan – more than willing to deploy US forces if he saw fit and he was certainly not constrained by a negative public view of such action. Jeffrey Record observes that Bush was 'self-assured' when it came to using force, his attitude towards this recourse very much reflective of his generation's experience of world affairs in the 1930s and 1940s, and his own active service in World War Two when he enlisted to become the navy's youngest fighter pilot. Bush sanctioned two major military interventions in his time in office. In December of 1989, he deployed 25,000 US troops to Panama in order to remove the regime of Manuel Noriega, a dictator whose reputed drug links, and his actions against both his own people and Americans living in Panama, had been a source of concern to Washington since the mid-1980s. As former Director of the CIA, Bush personally disliked Noriega (who had been on the CIA payroll), and a series of highly publicised attacks on American citizens in Panama – including the detention of a US Navy officer and the threatened rape of his wife – was enough to prompt Bush to launch a military operation to overthrow his regime.[16]

Bush's next challenge would be of far greater proportions. Indeed, it would come to define his presidency. After months of accusations and threats towards Kuwait, Iraq called the bluff of the international community and invaded its neighbour, on 2nd August 1990.[17] At the time of the invasion, the Bush administration had its eyes fixed upon Europe and the ending of the Cold War but this did not stop

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[16] Record (2002), pp. 96-101.
[17] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), pp. 302-314. See also: http://www.armyradio.com/publish/Articles/Desert_Storm_Equipment/Desert_Shield_Storm.htm (accessed 02/04/06).

President Bush from ordering US forces to lead a massive international military response to Iraq's incursion.[18] However, whilst the awesome task of marshalling and sustaining a durable international military coalition in the Persian Gulf was accomplished most impressively by Bush, he found garnering domestic support for his actions a far more difficult task. Greatly concerned about seeing US troops face both the half-million strong Iraqi Army *and* the chemical and biological weapons which it was thought to have at its disposal, Americans responded to the deployment of US forces with considerable scepticism. In seeking to banish this public scepticism, Bush failed. He could not stop the subject of Vietnam from dominating America's public-political debates over a possible military confrontation with Iraqi forces; he also failed to garner broad domestic support for the allied war which was eventually unleashed against Iraq.

Whilst he had taken office determined to complete Reagan's 'revisionist project' to finally overcome the Vietnam Syndrome, Bush's decision to deploy US troops to the Persian Gulf effectively ended any chance he had of achieving this.[19] Whilst the overwhelming victory that the US-led coalition achieved over Iraqi forces in the Persian Gulf might conceivably have exorcised Vietnam's demons once and for all (President Bush publicly claimed just this in the aftermath of military operations against Iraq), domestic critics subsequently pointed to Bush's imperious stewardship of the crisis *and* his consistent neglect of the domestic mood to accuse him instead of being the 'chief purveyor' of the Vietnam Syndrome.[20]

As this case study demonstrates, Bush's parameters for his Persian Gulf deployment certainly had the Vietnam Syndrome indelibly etched upon them. It also

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[18] Lawrence Freedman & Efraim Karsh (1994), *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991. Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, Faber & Faber, updated 2nd edition, pp. 1 & 4.
[19] Roper (2000), p. 161.
[20] Ibid, p. 173.

shows that – like his predecessor – he was perfectly willing to exercise his powers as Commander-in-Chief and to demonstrate that the buzzing of Vietnam radars is not enough to stop a President who is committed to using military force. Amidst a veritable maelstrom of public-political dissent and opposition, President Bush ordered US forces into their biggest military conflict since the Vietnam War.

Conflict in Kuwait – an overview

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was, in no small part, related to the Iran-Iraq War which was fought between 1980 and 1988.[21] The conflict had its roots in the efforts of Iran's Shi'ite leadership to 'export' the religious-political spirit of its 1979 revolution beyond its borders. Amongst the several Gulf regimes it focussed upon was the nationalist and secularist Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Tehran began attempting to undermine the Hussein regime, providing substantial support both to underground Sh'ite movements inside Iraq *and* to Iraq's Kurds in their long-standing struggle against the Iraqi central government. Hussein responded by sanctioning a series of ruthless reprisals against both of these groups. After Tehran had subsequently called for Iraqis to rise up against him, Hussein responded with vigour – he invaded Iran itself.

Despite the undoubted hostility of this act, however, Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh depict Hussein as something of a reluctant belligerent. He had made several efforts to placate the regime in Tehran and it was only when these efforts were rejected that he chose the military option. Hussein's reluctance to sanction hostilities

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[21] See for example: Dilip Hiro (1990), *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict*, Routledge, reprint edition; Efraim Karsh (2002), *The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988*, Essential Histories, Osprey Publishing.

may have been grounded less in any particular conflict-aversion on the part of the Iraqi leader than in a pragmatic concern that war was an undesirably costly venture at a time when Iraq's oil wealth was allowing it to pursue ambitious national development programmes. War against Iran would, Hussein knew, drastically change Iraq's economic position. His concerns were proven correct. The eight-year Iran-Iraq War pushed Iraq towards a financial crisis which would steer Saddam Hussein's subsequent actions and ultimately see him facing war with the United States. [22]

Post-war antagonisms, reprieve…then invasion

The debts accrued by Baghdad in its war against Iran ran to around $70 billion. With oil prices plummeting during the latter period of the conflict, Saddam Hussein asked some of his principal lenders, notably Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, to effectively write off Iraq's debts. Hussein reminded them that Iraqi blood had been spilt to protect them against fundamentalist Islam. At a meeting of the Arab Co-operation Council in February of 1990, six months before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Hussein requested a further $30 billion of funding. This request coincided with the onset of Iraqi military manoeuvres near the Kuwaiti border.[23]

Hussein's frustrations with Kuwait increased in the following months. Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)) repeatedly refused Baghdad's requests to limit their oil production, a move which would let Iraq boost its own production and increase its revenues. With Kuwait and the UAE continuing to far exceed their production quotas, and with world oil prices remaining low, Hussein calculated that

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[22] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 8-9 & 19-20.
[23] Murtha (2006), pp. 108-109; Freedman & Karsh (1994), p. 45.

the economic loss to Iraq, which was rapidly sliding into impoverishment, amounted to some $89 billion. The role that both the UAE and Kuwait were playing in heaping this financial loss upon Baghdad was, the Iraqi leader declared, tantamount to a declaration of war.[24]

Aside from the issue of oil production and its economic impact upon Iraq, the subject of Iraq's debt itself was also an increasing source of tension between Kuwait City and Baghdad. Despite being pressurised by Saddam Hussein, the Emir of Kuwait continued to refuse to waive the repayment of Kuwait's war loans to Baghdad and subsequently refused a request from Hussein for a $10 billion contribution to the Iraqi economy. The Emir stated that $500 million was all that Kuwait would provide for the Hussein regime, any further support being dependent upon resolving ongoing border and oil disputes between the two countries. Amidst continuing disagreements on these issues, Hussein accused Kuwait of setting up military installations, oil installations and farms on Iraq's territory, during the years when Baghdad's attention had been focussed on waging its war against Iran. Whether or not there was any basis to these accusations, they provided Hussein with the rationale for a more aggressive stance towards his neighbour. By mid-July, Iraqi forces began mustering in south-eastern Iraq, just north of the Kuwaiti border.[25]

US military intelligence had been monitoring these altercations. However, Iraq's show of force on the Iraq-Kuwait border did not overly concern the Bush White House. The administration remained confident that Saddam Hussein was merely 'strong-arming' the Kuwaitis, a view which was nourished in no small part by a series of meetings between April Glaspie, the US Ambassador to Iraq, and Hussein

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[24] Ibid, pp. 46 & 48; Murtha (2006), pp. 108-109.
[25] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 46-48.

himself.[26] Whilst these meetings were often heated, and persistently peppered by Hussein's tirades over various injustices suffered by Iraq, they left Glaspie with the impression that the Iraqi leader had no intention of actually invading Kuwait. Having assuaged Hussein's apparent paranoia that President Bush was going to declare an 'economic war' on Iraq, Glaspie told Hussein that the United States did not have an opinion on such inter-Arab disputes as the one Hussein currently found himself in with Kuwait City. Hussein subsequently gave Ambassador Glaspie an 'unconditional pledge' that he would not use force against Kuwait.[27]

Thus towards the end of July 1990, notwithstanding rumblings to the contrary from within the American intelligence community, the view from the White House was that the crisis had dissipated.[28] It proved to be the wrong view. On 2nd August, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, seized Kuwaiti oil fields, installed a new government in Kuwait City and then moved towards the Saudi Arabian border. Henceforth, Saddam Hussein declared, Kuwait should be considered Iraq's 19th Province.[29]

First decisions in Washington – what should America's response be?

The invasion galvanised a swift response from the international community. The United Nations condemned the invasion that very day, passing Resolution 660 which ordered Iraq to 'withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces to the positions in which they were located on 1st August 1990'.[30] By the end of the month, the UN Security Council had passed other resolutions imposing full economic

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[26] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), pp. 302-313 & 314.
[27] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 52-55.
[28] Ibid, pp. 54 & 57.
[29] Grimmett, 1st March , 2007, p. 24.
[30] Freedman & Karsh (1994), p. 81.

sanctions upon Iraq (Resolution 661, passed on 6th August; only Cuba and Yemen abstained), formally rejecting Iraq's declared annexation of Kuwait (Resolution 662, passed on 9th August with no abstentions), demanding that Iraq respect international law and order the 'immediate release' of held foreign nationals (Resolution 664, passed unanimously on 18th August), and permitting the United States and its allies to use 'all measures commensurate to the specific circumstances as may be necessary', in order to stop and board ships violating the embargo implemented under Resolution 661 (Resolution 665, passed on Saturday 25th, with Cuba and Yemen abstaining).[31] The response of the Bush White House to the invasion was also strident. Denouncing the invasion as 'a blatant use of military aggression and violation of the UN Charter', President Bush demanded 'the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces'.[32] This language was backed by vigorous action. Within hours of the invasion, Bush had ordered US warships to the Persian Gulf and had frozen Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets in the United States.[33]

The boldness of Bush's response quickly sparked public concerns in the United States. Bush himself notes that almost as soon as news of the invasion broke, the American media were 'speculating wildly' about the possibility of a US military response. Indeed, the very first question at the first White House press conference held after the invasion was whether the President was 'considering intervention' as an option. Already thinking of such a possibility, but mindful also that he could 'little afford bellicose mistakes' in public, Bush responded in the negative, convinced that

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[31] Ibid, pp. 83-84 (Resolution 661); p. 99 (Resolution 661); p. 137 (Resolution 664); pp. 149-150 (Resolution 665. See also: 'Chrononlogy, The Gulf Crisis: UN Security Council Actions', Bush Presidential Records, White House Office of Public Affairs, Kristen Gear files: 'Tips/Fact Sheet Persian Gulf'. [OD/ID 03417]. The George H. W. Bush Presidential Library (Henceforth 'BPL' (Bush Presidential Library)).

[32] 'Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary', 1st August 1990, Bush Presidential Records, White House Office of Public Affairs, Kristen Gear files: 'Iraq' [2] [OD/ID 03417]. BPL.

[33] Freedman & Karsh (1994) p. 85; Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 314.

he and his administration 'had a big job ahead' if they were to rally domestic and international opinion behind such an option.[34]

Despite his concerns about Americans' conflict-aversions, it was clear that not everyone advocated a cautious stance from the White House. *The Dallas Morning News*, for example, asserted that the US 'must act forcefully' and that Iraq's 'blatant show of power politics must be met with equally strong action.'[35] Far more forceful than this, some of the language in *The Wall Street Journal* bordered on the belligerent; it criticised 'the West's aversion to military involvement' and voiced disapproval that it took President Bush 'four days even to suggest forcing the eviction of Iraqi invaders from Kuwait'. Lamenting that any Western response to the crisis would probably be 'too little too late', the article criticised Saddam Hussein as being 'vain, amoral' and 'caring nothing for the human costs of his people'. Drawing attention to the 'lessons of Munich', the *Journal* asserted that 'barring military action, little stands in his [Hussein's] way'. America's response, it warned, 'cannot be allowed to wallow in the experience of Vietnam.'[36]

Despite the early appearance of the subject of Vietnam, it was the Munich analogy which steered much of Bush's initial thinking on the crisis. He felt that Hussein's actions were a glaring example of naked international aggression, resonant of the actions of Hitler during the 1930s and 1940s, and that such flagrant aggression should be checked.[37] Precisely how to achieve this was the key question his foreign policy team now deliberated. At the first National Security Council (NSC) meeting after the invasion, it was the plight of Saudi Arabia – specifically, the possibility that it might fall next to Iraqi forces – which dominated much of the agenda. It was

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[34] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 315.
[35] 'Iraq Invasion. US Must Act Forcefully', *Dallas Morning News* editorial, 3rd August, 1990.
[36] Karen Elliot House, 'No Appeasement of Iraq', *The Wall Street Journal*, 7th August, 1990.
[37] Freedman & Karsh (1994), p. 75; Halberstam (2001), p. 75; Record (2002), pp. 101-104; Bush & Scowcroft (1998), pp. 374-375.

estimated that in controlling Kuwait, Iraq now held roughly 20% of the world's oil reserves and that this could double if Iraqi forces were to go to invade Kuwait's neighbour.[38] Whilst there were genuine concerns about this possibility, this threat to Saudi Arabia was also flagged as a possible way of publicly justifying the deployment of US forces to the Persian Gulf region. Some within the Bush team speculated that Americans would be more likely to support a deployment if that deployment was tasked with defending 'innocent' Saudi Arabia against marauding Iraqi forces.

However, whilst the defence of Saudi Arabia did appear to be a powerful justification for deploying, others at the meeting felt that publicly declaring the fate of Saudi Arabia as a prime American concern at this early stage in the crisis had serious implications. Foremost amongst these was that if the White House *was* to publicly commit itself to saving Saudi Arabia from falling next to Iraq, then it was effectively committing itself to the military defence of that country and would have no option but to stand and fight if Iraq forces breeched the Saudi border. Wary of pushing the United States into an early – and perhaps unnecessary – military confrontation, Bush's Secretary of State, James Baker, argued that the administration should accentuate the need for a *diplomatic* resolution to the crisis and publicly declare this intention to Americans and to the international community. Baker also made clear his reluctance to contemplate the use of military force – he was, in President Bush's own words, 'worried that we could get bogged down in another Vietnam.' Defence Secretary Dick Cheney also worried about the Vietnam Syndrome and expressed concerns that Americans would have a low tolerance for any protracted conflict and US military casualties. However, National Security Advisor (NSA) Brent Scowcroft disagreed with those viewpoints; he believed that Americans *would* support US

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[38] Freedman & Karsh (1994), p. 74.

military action in the Persian Gulf as long as the White House was able to convince them that such action was really necessary. Citing the need to protect 'defenceless' Saudi Arabia, he asserted, might be effective in generating that support.[39]

Aside from the domestic considerations, Defence Secretary Cheney also highlighted the importance of how the wider international community might respond to any forceful American response. The United States must, Cheney stressed, tread a prudent line – specifically, it should not become isolated in any stance it might take against Iraq, especially if the chosen recourse was military action. Whilst the American response should not come across as overly belligerent, it was also necessary, he argued, for the administration to display a stance of conviction and strength to the world, if it was to generate allied support; 'Saudi Arabia and others will cut and run if we are weak', he warned his colleagues.[40]

How the United States was perceived by the international community was a source of genuine concern in those first few meetings, especially since there was a degree of acceptance within the administration that it had possibly made a mistake in dealing so offhandedly with Saddam Hussein in the previous months. Some wondered whether the White House's somewhat nonchalant view of the growing tensions between Kuwait and Iraq may even have given Saddam Hussein the impression that Washington would overlook any aggression on his part, especially given Ambassador Glaspie's message to him shortly before the invasion.[41] The administration thus agreed on the strategy of publicly depicting Saudi Arabia as being a 'vital interest' to the United States. Aside from offering a stark public warning to Baghdad against any further military incursions, positing the United States as

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[39] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), pp. 353-354.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid, pp. 310-312, 317 & 354; Powell (1995), pp. 461-462.

Riyadh's defender would also, it was hoped, justify the deployment of US forces to the region, both domestically and internationally.

Announcing this position was not without its difficulties, however. Aside from the problem of selling this stance to the American public-political arena (a point that CJS General Colin Powell explicitly raised with President Bush during the course of that first meeting), a more immediate difficulty lay in persuading King Fahd, the Saudi ruler, to actually agree to host US military forces on his territory. From the perspective of the Bush White House, this was clearly a fundamental concession, not only if the US were to act to defend the country against a possible Iraqi invasion but also if it were going to offer credible public justifications for deploying US forces to the Persian Gulf – it was obvious that 'the defence of Saudi Arabia' would look like a ridiculous excuse if the Saudi leader refused to let his 'defenders' cross his borders.[42]

King Fahd took some persuading on this issue. Despite recognising the very real threat represented by the Iraqi forces mustering near his border, he expressed concerns over having American soldiers based in his conservative Muslim kingdom. He was also concerned about the likely strength of the US commitment. In a meeting with Defence Secretary Dick Cheney, Fahd pointed to the Reagan administration's lukewarm commitment to the Lebanese government back in 1983; he wanted assurances that the current President would not be similarly irresolute if American troops were to come under threat.[43]

Cheney managed to assuage the King's concerns. On 6th August (the same day that the UN Security Council passed Resolution 661, prohibiting all trade with Iraq) he telephoned the White Housed from Jidda to inform President Bush of the

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[42] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), pp. 317, 324-325 & 329-333. See also the *PBS Frontline* interview with Colin Powell (accessed 29/03/06) at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/powell/1.html
[43] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 83-84 & 87.

King's approval.[44] It was an important moment since the White House could now begin publicly enacting its self-professed commitment to Riyadh. The next day, US forces moved into positions inside Saudi Arabia, as part of *Operation Desert Shield*. The operation was formally announced the following day and President Bush made the case for the deployment, in anticipation of the domestic opposition which it would undoubtedly provoke. He proceeded with a strong argument, one that he would return to consistently in the coming months – he publicly compared America's challenge in the Persian Gulf to that which faced the world as Nazi Germany started its aggressive expansion through Europe. In a national address on 8th August, Bush told Americans that Iraqi forces had invaded Kuwait 'blitzkrieg fashion' and that 'if history teaches us anything, it is that we must resist aggression or it will destroy our freedoms. Appeasement does not work. As was the case in the 1930s'.[45]

The legitimacy of America's military presence in the region was then given a considerable boost when, after a 10th August meeting of The Arab League in Cairo, member states agreed (albeit by a narrow vote) that Egyptian, Syrian and Moroccan troops would be deployed to join US forces in the Persian Gulf.[46] Bush's initial concerns over leading the response to the invasion – principally that Washington should not have 'a solo US effort in the Middle East' – thus appeared to be dissipating. Over the next two weeks, the number of US troops in the region swelled to over thirty thousand, the international legitimacy of their presence cemented by the

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[44] Powell (1995), pp. 465-467; Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 83-84.
[45] President Bush, 'Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia', 8th August, 1990.
[46] For details, see the BBC website (accessed 02/04/06) at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/861164.stm.

array of regional and international allies who were now committing themselves to joining the American-led international coalition.[47]

Despite the growing support for the American position, however, Baghdad appeared to be unmoved. Aside from ignoring demands that Iraqi forces withdraw from Kuwait, Iraqi ships continued to break the UN-enforced trade embargo, actions which stirred the ire of President Bush and prompted his administration to discuss whether it really could punish an impenitent Iraq through the laborious channels of the UN. Some administration figures now advocated avoiding the inevitable UN protractions and 'going it alone'; this view was shared by Bush's key ally, the hawkish British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. However, whilst he himself felt frustrated at Iraq's apparent nonchalance, Bush dismissed this option. He reasoned that any US unilateralist actions might unravel the legitimising UN consensus he had striven to build up over the previous weeks. If the coalition were seen to be fragmenting because America's international allies were unhappy at Washington's belligerence, it would also weaken the administration's stated commitment to diplomacy and international consensus-building. Bush decided to stick with the multilateral approach, opting for a strategy of trying to convince America's allies to invoke tougher measures through the UN so that the embargo could be enforced with tough – but legitimate – measures.[48] Bush's prudence paid off when Resolution 661 passed through the United Nations on 25th August. The Resolution set in motion precisely the measures that he had been pushing his allies to implement; legitimate recourse to stop, board and – if necessary – disable any vessel suspected of breaking

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[47] John Mueller (1994), *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War*, University of Chicago Press, table 8 p.193; *PBS Frontline* interview with Colin Powell.
[48] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 145-150.

the embargo against Iraq.[49] Bush hoped that this latest legislation would spell out clearly to Baghdad that the international community was not bluffing and that it would not tolerate Iraq's efforts to ignore due international process.

Thus, by the end of August, President Bush could look back on a month of genuine success in dealing with the Persian Gulf crisis. His response to Iraq's invasion had been quick and decisive and he had garnered both an international military coalition *and* legitimate international consensus behind him. However, this international success was achieved amidst growing rumblings of concern back home in the United States.

September – the first cracks appear

Despite the sanctions, Saddam Hussein's obduracy continued and President Bush started to feel more frustration with the lack of progress. He was becoming convinced that the international diplomatic posturing would do nothing to persuade the Iraqi leader to withdraw his forces. Iraqi troops would, Bush thought, very likely have to be removed from Kuwait through force. However, whilst he was frustrated by Hussein's stance, he was also growing increasingly frustrated by attitudes much closer to home. Eager to prepare for what lay ahead – Bush felt that time was of the essence since the international coalition would likely only hold together for a limited amount of time – he felt that he was having to repeatedly demand information and clarification from his policy advisors. He experienced particular frustration with the military chiefs at the Pentagon.

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[49] Ibid.

For all that he enjoyed a very good working relationship with them, Bush was becoming increasingly exasperated with the chiefs, as they deliberated the options for possible military action in the Persian Gulf. However, the chiefs were *also* showing signs of exasperation and it was their Commander-in-Chief who was the cause of *their* anxieties. Amidst the various policy options he had solicited in the aftermath of Iraq's invasion, that President Bush had been impressed by the arguments made by 'air power advocates' in both the US and Saudi Air Forces, who were convinced that an air offensive alone would be sufficient to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Eager to find a speedy and decisive option (one which would minimise as much as possible the risk of incurring US military casualties), Bush appeared to have settled upon a quick air war as the ideal strategy for dealing with Iraqi forces. He now repeatedly pushed this option to the chiefs. However, an aerial bombing campaign was certainly *not* what chief planners in the Pentagon had in mind. They envisioned a far more comprehensive military offensive, even although they knew that it would take quite some time to prepare it. Worried at the President's restlessness and concerned that he appeared to have been 'oversold on air power', CJS General Colin Powell raised his concerns with Defence Secretary Cheney: 'The President's getting really impatient', he told Cheney; 'He keeps asking if we can't get the Iraqis out of Kuwait with air strikes.'[50]

General Powell was certainly not unsympathetic to his Commander-in-Chief's position; he appreciated Bush's agitation over the current stalemate and he certainly shared Bush's desire for a decisive military victory. However, Powell harboured grave concerns over the President's assumption that an air campaign would be simple, quick and effective. He felt that if Iraqi forces were faced *just* with an onslaught from

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[50] Powell (1995), pp. 476, 478-479.

the air, they would simply dig into defensive positions. This would effectively let the leadership in Baghdad decide when it had had enough of the allied bombardments. As far as Powell was concerned (and his views were shared by General Norman Schwarzkopf, whom Powell had tasked with leading the military planning process), this was a completely unacceptable scenario; he felt that it should be *the Americans* and *not* the Iraqis who decided when enough was enough. Since the United States had both the power and capacity to do so, Powell was convinced that the surest strategy was to 'go in big and end it quickly' with a full land, sea and air campaign. This strategy was thus one which was very much in keeping with the 'overwhelming force' ethos which was so deeply ingrained in the Pentagon psyche.[51]

For his part, President Bush felt that the clock was ticking and he felt frustrated by the sluggishness of the military planning process. He was not wholly convinced by the chiefs' coolness over the viability of a quick air campaign. Bush harboured suspicions that they were simply reluctant to confront Iraq militarily and that they were constantly overestimating the threat posed by the Iraqi army in an effort to test his willingness to commit to full military action.[52]

The military chiefs were not the only doubters that Bush had to deal with amongst his key advisors at this point. NSA Brent Scowcroft also continued to express doubts about possible military actions against Iraq and about how the international community would view American aggression. In particular, he doubted that Washington's European allies – especially in Moscow – would consider war unless every other option had been explored.[53] However, concerns over the pros and cons of a possible military showdown in the Persian Gulf were not confined to the corridors of power in Washington.

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[51] Ibid, pp. 476 & 487.
[52] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 353.
[53] Ibid.

Whilst Bush's assured response to Iraq's invasion met with early public approval in the United States – some opinion polls suggested 80% approval for his handling of the crisis – by September, this endorsement had slipped somewhat.[54] At the heart of America's growing unease over the crisis was the Bush administration's struggle to simultaneously deliver two entirely different messages to two very different constituencies. On the one hand, Bush felt that Saddam Hussein needed to receive a clear warning that the United States was quite prepared to lead an international military coalition to use force against him if he did not withdraw his forces from Kuwait. Bush was thus transparent in his intention to assemble a massive military force in the Persian Gulf region and he communicated intentionally stern words to the regime in Baghdad about the consequences of maintaining its occupation.

However, this deliberately strident message to Baghdad had a detrimental impact upon the message that President Bush was simultaneously trying to communicate to Americans back home – namely, that he was committed to a *diplomatic* solution and so there was no basis for domestic critics to forecast an intractable military quagmire involving US forces in the Persian Gulf. As they watched the White House's vigorous coalition-building efforts and the deployment of more and more US forces to the Persian Gulf, increasing numbers of Americans appeared to view the White House line with scepticism. In an effort to calm speculation about an imminent war, President Bush consciously toned down the belligerence of his public statements about the crisis and administration figures stepped up their public declarations over their commitment to a diplomatic solution.[55]

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[54] Available on the BBC website (accessed 02/04/06) at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/861164.stm. Freedman & Karsh (1994), p. 201; Mueller (1994), table 8, p.193.

[55] Freedman & Karsh (1994), p. 202.

Concerned at this apparent slide in public support, CJS Powell warned Bush that successfully achieving the required dual-diplomatic task – sending placatory signals to a wary American polity whilst offering a forthright warning to Baghdad – now represented 'a major political problem'.[56]

Powell was correct; indeed, this problem soon evidenced itself still further. As media commentary on the crisis continued to reverberate to accusations that the President was 'rattling sabers', a growing array of voices on Capitol Hill was questioning the lack of political debate that had taken place prior to Bush's initial sanctioning, and subsequent escalation, of the US military presence in the Persian Gulf.[57] Partisan wrangling over the American economy also began to infuse commentary and analysis of Bush's performance. Notwithstanding the fact that *Operation Desert Shield* was an exercise costing around $30 million per day, many Democrats were now claiming that the White House was so keen to focus America's attention on Kuwait because it distracted attention away from President Bush's domestic budgetary failings.[58] Critics also focussed upon proposed cutbacks to the US armed forces. These cutbacks – which, if enacted, would see the smallest US military since the 1950s – were widely known to be opposed by key administration figures, something which prompted political and media critics to suggest that Bush's strident Persian Gulf policy was nothing less than an exercise aimed at convincing Congress of the need to uphold defence spending.[59] Writing in *The New York Times*,

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[56] *PBS Frontline* interview with Colin Powell.
[57] 'A New World Order. Bush speech rings with resolve to tame Saddam', *The Houston Post*, 12th September, 1990. For media suggestions that Bush was sabre-rattling, see the President's question-and-answer session in President Bush, 'Remarks on the Persian Gulf Crisis and an Exchange With Reporters', 14th September, 1990.
[58] Freedman & Karsh (1994), p216.
[59] Michael Oreskes, 'Bush Trying a New Topic. Is Talk of War Driven by Policy or Politics?' *New York Times*, 31st October, 1990.

James Webb asked whether the President's willingness to pick up the gauntlet thrown down by Saddam Hussein was merely part of a 'Pentagon budget drill'.[60]

Bush felt dismayed by such commentary and also by opinion polls which suggested a further deterioration of domestic support for how he was handling the crisis. However, things were set to get even more difficult for his now-faltering public offensive.[61] At a White House press briefing on 17th September, Defence Secretary Cheney fuelled congressional unrest over the administration's lack of legislative consultation and invigorated fears of an imminent war. When challenged by journalists that the administration would have to 'come to grips' with the War Powers Act and inform Congress about possible hostilities in the Persian Gulf, Cheney was vehement in his response. He told reporters that the administration *had* reported to Congress 'in a manner that was consistent with the War Powers Act provisions' and that whilst he hoped to avoid 'major confrontation' with Congress, the Act 'may well be unconstitutional' and 'an inappropriate limitation upon Presidential power and authority'. Having effectively dismissed legislators' concerns over expanding US involvement in the crisis, he then made a statement which very much contravened the administration line that there was no looming war in the Persian Gulf. Responding to one reporter's suggestion that it was time to 'wrap up the deployment now', Cheney rejected the suggestion, asserting that American military personnel 'may be engaged in hostilities in the very near future.' [62]

Cheney's inopportune allusion to possible imminent hostilities was just what the administration had been taking pains to publicly deny. The remark paved the way for a difficult White House press conference for President Bush, just a few hours later.

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[60] James Webb, 'In the Gulf, the Danger of a Diplomatic Solution. . . And the Horrors of a Desert War', *New York Times*, 23rd September 1990.
[61] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 372.
[62] 'Press Briefing by Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney', 17th September, 1990, Bush Presidential Records, White House Office of Public Affairs. Kristen Gear Files. 'Iraq 2' [OA/ ID 03418], BPL.

In it, he sought to quell speculation of a looming conflict but Cheney's earlier reference seemed to have set Vietnam radars buzzing amongst the assembled journalists. Bush was forced to deny suggestions that the chances of avoiding a 'shooting war' were fast diminishing and he responded carefully to questions regarding the numbers of US military casualties which could be expected from any confrontation with Iraqi forces. When one journalist put it to Bush that US troops might soon be facing 'thousands and thousands' of casualties, Bush remarked only that the American people were 'magnificently united' in standing up to Iraq's aggression and that he didn't 'feel comfortable going beyond that'. Responding to another reporter's reminder that the American public 'doesn't support stalemates that last a long, long time', Bush assured his audience that US forces would not be tied down in the Gulf region for in indefinite period of time. I want American troops out of the Gulf 'as soon as possible', he declared; 'I want them all out…all out, period.' [63]

Bush and Cheney's mixed public messages during this period refocused the administration's awareness of the difficulty of its public diplomatic task – namely, communicating threatening warnings to Baghdad about the consequences of its continuing occupation, whilst simultaneously denying belligerence and emphasising diplomacy to Americans back home. However, as it struggled to rein in domestic war speculation, and as the wait for Baghdad to respond to sanctions dragged on, the administration was fast becoming disenchanted with its 'passive' response to the crisis.

In a 24th September White House meeting, the Bush team discussed its current options and the frustration of being hostage to Saddam Hussein's decisions. General Powell outlined to President Bush, in candid terms, the problems he was creating for

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[63] 'Remarks by the President during briefing for regional reporters', 17th September, 1990, Bush Presidential Records, White House Office of Public Affairs, Kristen Gear Files, 'Iraq 2' [OA/ ID 03418], BPL.

himself in simply waiting for the UN sanctions to work. He told Bush that in adopting this policy, he was not seizing the initiative from his enemy and 'essentially hoping that this pressure will cause your enemy to come to a decision rather than you making the decision for him.'[64] Powell's warning to the President coincided with concerns raised by the United States Information Agency (USIA), which had been maintaining a watchful eye on what it described as an 'extremely active' disinformation campaign against the United States. Slanderous propaganda – both from 'unfriendly' media sources and from the Iraqi government itself – could, it warned, undermine Washington's position and 'erode Arab support for *Operation Desert Shield*'. Whilst acknowledging that much of Iraq's propaganda was 'crude', 'ridiculous' and 'primitive', the agency echoed Powell's concerns by warning that prolonging the standoff increased the chances that Iraq's seditions could create doubts and divisions amongst Washington's Arab allies, allies which were absolutely crucial to America's legitimacy in leading the crisis.[65]

Convinced that straying from the UN pathway would create these alliance divisions anyway, Bush resolved to remain focussed upon coalition-building and upon trying to improve the public diplomatic offensive. In Burlington, Vermont, on 23rd October, he declared that his strident response to the crisis was for the cause of 'a world order free from unlawful aggression, free from violence, free from plunder'. Mindful of accusations that his administration's strong stance was aimed at defending Western oil supplies and *not* Kuwait's liberty, Bush acknowledged the criticisms and admitted that he recognised protestors' concerns:

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[64] *PBS Frontline* interview with Colin Powell.

[65] Iraq's 'crude' propaganda asserted, amongst other things, that 40 percent of American solders had AIDS, that they were defiling Muslim holy sites and that many American troops were actually 'Israelis disguised as Americans, with fake IDS and false names'. United States Information Agency, Press Intelligence: 'Saddam's Propaganda War', Bush Presidential Records, White House Office of Public Affairs, Kristen Gear Files, 'Iraqi Disinformation' [OA/ ID 03418], BPL.

> I saw some signs coming in [to the venue]: 'No War for Oil'. I can understand the sentiment by some of those young people. But I would simply say that the rape and the systematic dismantling of Kuwait defies description. The holding of hostages, innocent men and women whose only mistake was to be in Kuwait or be in Iraq when the invader took over Kuwait – holding them goes against the conscience of the entire world. The starving of embassies – good God, this is 1990. And you see this man [Saddam Hussein] starving out small embassies in Kuwait. These are crimes against humanity. [66]

Bush then returned to the nub of why Saddam Hussein *should* face the threat of international reprisals from an American-led coalition:

> I'm reading a book, and it's a book of history – great, big, thick history about World War Two. And there's a parallel between what Hitler did to Poland and what Saddam Hussein has done to Kuwait. Hitler rolled his tanks and troops into Poland…And do you know what followed the troops? It was the Death's Head regiment. Do you know what the Death's Head regiments of the SS were? They were the ones that went in and lined up the kids that were passing out leaflets. Do you know what happened in Kuwait the other day? Two young kids, mid-teens, passing out leaflets – Iraqi soldiers came, got their parents out and watched as they killed them…So, it isn't oil that we're concerned about. It is aggression. And this aggression is not going to stand.[67]

Despite this strident tone, and yet another emotive attempt to liken Hussein to Hitler, the Bush administration remained concerned about the effectiveness of its public diplomacy. Americans simply did not appear particularly receptive to the case being made. Administration officials were also growing increasingly concerned about how committed some of its key allies were to maintaining a unified stance against Iraq.

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[66] President Bush, 'Remarks at a Republican Fundraising Breakfast in Burlington, Vermont', 23rd October, 1990.
[67] Ibid.

With the USIA reporting that Saddam Hussein's negotiators were actively 'probing for weaknesses in the alliance's resolve', the administration now suspected that France and the Soviet Union were themselves actively undermining America's efforts. On 31st October, *The Washington Post* reported that Paris and Moscow were both 'staking out positions somewhat independent of the United States' in an effort to 'preserve their long-standing relationships in the Middle-East'.[68] These concerns were nourished by the October visit to Baghdad of Yevgeny Primakov, President Gorbachev's senior aide and special envoy to Iraq. A 'vociferous critic' of what some key Soviet figures castigated as the pro-American line adopted by Moscow in response to the crisis, Primakov had travelled to Baghdad, Washington feared, to 'cut a deal' with Saddam Hussein over the crisis.[69] Concerned that Paris and Moscow's divergent diplomatic overtures risked undermining what he knew would be a finite period of coalition solidarity in the Persian Gulf, Bush now realised that pressure had to be stepped up on Iraq once more, if the standoff was to be pushed to a conclusion. If the fragile coalition were to start fragmenting and Iraq did indeed have to be confronted militarily, it would leave the United States isolated and bereft of the international legitimacy it currently enjoyed.

In the face of these frustrating new developments, Bush told his foreign policy team that he did not think that they could afford to wait for sanctions to work and that pressure now had to be ratcheted up considerably on Baghdad.[70] However, the administration knew that the act of escalating the forcefulness of its stance against

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[68] David Hoffman, 'US Raises the Pressure and The Risks', *The Washington Post*, 31st October, 1990. France and the Soviet Union had significant trade links with Iraq and were Iraq's largest arms suppliers; Freedman & Karsh (1994), p. 38.

[69] Primakov also traveled to Washington in an effort to persuade President Bush not to pursue hostilities with Baghdad. See Ariel Cohen, 'Shevardnadze's Journey', *Policy Review*, Vol. 73, No. 1, April & May, 2004, p. 124; Paul Bedard, 'Bush Prepares the Country for War', *The Washington Times*, 2nd November, 1990; Bush & Scowcroft (1998), pp. 366 & 377-378.

[70] *PBS Frontline* interview with Colin Powell.

Saddam Hussein – a necessary act, it seemed – would *further* undermine its faltering efforts to convince Americans that it was trying to *avoid* military confrontation. Caught between what *The Washington Post* termed an 'increasingly sceptical American public' (a public which, Bush noted resentfully, appeared to be 'unmoved' by the atrocities being perpetrated by Iraqi forces inside Kuwait) and a recalcitrant Saddam Hussein who appeared impervious to any intimidation, a senior State Department official admitted that the Bush White House had 'two very distinct audiences' to persuade.[71]

Whilst Bush was concerned that neither of these 'audiences' seemed particularly receptive to what the White House had to say, his concerns were also being roused by the planning process at the Pentagon. Himself, Cheney and Scowcroft were growing increasingly anxious over the military chiefs' attitude towards the crisis. The military planners were, in Bush's own words, 'waffling and vacillating in terms of what we can do on the ground' and after one NSC meeting, NSA Scowcroft was so 'appalled' by the tepid presentation prepared by the military chiefs that Defence Secretary Cheney 'sent the planners back to the drawing board'.[72] The military's deployment-caution was now starting to seriously test the patience of their civilian masters.

This was a very difficult period for Bush. His diary records that he worried over declaring war, experienced doubts as to whether he could win public and congressional support for such a move, and that he felt unsettled over the possibility of 'sending kids into battle and the lives being lost.'[73] The President's pensive deliberations over the crisis were not helped by deteriorating relations between the

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[71] David Hoffman, 'US Raises the Pressure and The Risks', *The Washington Post*, 31st October, 1990; Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 358.
[72] Ibid, pp. 377, 381 & 383; Powell (1995), pp. 484-485.
[73] Ibid, p. 381.

White House and Capitol Hill, as restive legislators continued attacking Bush's domestic showing and reminding him that decisions on the commitment of US forces had to be made through consultation.[74]

On 2nd October 1990, the Senate passed Congressional Resolution 147, which formally appropriated funds for operations in the Persian Gulf. The Resolution stated that 'Congress supports continued action by the President in accordance with the decisions of the United Nations'. However, if Bush felt a degree of relief at the move – it was, he acknowledged, the first time that Congress had officially 'gone on record behind our troop deployment' – leaders on Capitol Hill were quick to remind the President that it should not be interpreted as an open-ended resolution akin to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.[75] If Congress' measure of support might have been viewed as an olive branch to the White House at this time of crisis, Bush openly rejected the chance to reciprocate. He refused Congress' offer to establish a bipartisan 'special consultation group' over the Persian Gulf crisis. Predictably, the President's refusal did not go down well on Capitol Hill. With a substantial US force now in the Persian Gulf region (including around 200,000 American troops), Bush's rejection fuelled accusations that the White House was continuing to marginalise Congress even as it continued deploying US forces to the periphery of a war-zone.[76]

He may have been marginalising Congress from the deployment planning process but Bush now acted on legislators' demands that any escalation in action against Iraq should be done through the United Nations. He ordered the drawing up of a draft UN resolution which would authorize the use of military force, should Iraq continue its military occupation of Kuwait. Aside from the demands of an

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[74] Ibid, p. 379; Grimmett, 1st March, 2007, p. 24.
[75] Michael Oreskes, 'Bush Trying a New Topic. Is Talk of War Driven by Policy or Politics?' *New York Times*, 31st October, 1990; David Hoffman, 'US Raises the Pressure and The Risks', *The Washington Post*, 31st October, 1990.
[76] Grimmett, 1st March, 2007, p. 25; Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 379.

increasingly restive Congress, it seemed to Bush that the current climate made this action a necessity. For a start, there remained absolutely no sign of an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Also, Paris and Moscow were insistent on attaining legitimising UN resolutions for any further action against Baghdad. Bush was also very well aware that he did not have anything like broad domestic backing for his handling of the Persian Gulf crisis and that one of the chief criticisms he faced was that he was unilaterally marching the United States into a war. It thus seemed clear that sticking to the UN pathway was the key to legitimising – both domestically and internationally – any possible military action against Iraqi forces. The basic format of the resolution was finalised by the end of the month and the administration pencilled in mid-November for it to be formally presented to, and voted on by, the Security Council.[77]

Vietnam shadows loom

As executive-legislative relations grew increasingly sour through October, Bush took to reading about how Lyndon Johnson had engaged with Congress over escalating American involvement in Vietnam, as he contemplated how he might sway Capitol Hill behind his Persian Gulf efforts.[78] However, the President wasn't the only one in Washington with Vietnam on his mind. The subject was also infusing Persian Gulf debates on Capitol Hill. Representative James McDermott (Dem. WA), for example, openly criticised Bush's handling of the crisis and drew parallels between the current US deployments sanctioned by the President and those as American involvement in

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[77] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 228-230.
[78] Ibid, p. 371.

Vietnam escalated. However, whilst McDermott sought to criticise Bush's attitude to Congress and the wisdom of deploying US forces to the Gulf, he also reminded his colleagues of the role that Congress played in allowing the US escalation in Vietnam. Warning the House that 'Congress has given the President a free hand to resolve the crisis in Kuwait' and that he (McDermott) had begun to question 'the strength of our commitment, the length of our commitment, and the fundamental purpose of our commitment', he declared that whilst the Iraq crisis was 'not the Gulf of Tonkin', similar questions were asked of the government in 1964 during debate of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. He reminded the House that he himself had served in Vietnam and that he had 'treated the casualties of that war'. 'For too long', he asserted, 'our country lied to those soldiers, and we deluded ourselves'. Concluding that the White House should 'look beyond the deployment of US troops', he asserted that he would 'never again…consent to risking American lives for vague "national interests"'.[79]

This argument was sustained by New York Democrat Charles Rangel on 19th October, after the announcement of a further deployment of US troops to the Persian Gulf. Rangel reminded the House of the War Powers Act which, he maintained, was ignored by the Bush administration when it sent troops to Panama in December 1989, and which was being ignored again in the current crisis. The Act, Rangel asserted, was:

> …Far from academic. Following the calamity of Vietnam, the law represents our only protection against unilateral, and potentially disastrous military adventures by the executive branch…to prevent another tragedy of the kind witnessed in Vietnam.[80]

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[79] James A. McDermott (1990), 'Opposing the Persian Gulf Resolution'; Extension of Remarks in House of Representatives, 5th October 1990. * NB – unless stated otherwise, all of the congressional debates and comments cited in this study can be found (by date/legislator's name & comments 'title') at Library of Congress' *Thomas* search facility: http://thomas.loc.gov/home/r104query.html

[80] Charles B.Rangel, 'How much abuse can the Constitution take?' Comments to the House of Representatives, Thursday 18th October, 1990.

Much of the American media reflected this criticism. The following week the *Detroit News* – carrying the headline 'Only Congress Can Declare War' – acknowledged that despite the risks of 'binding the President's hands', only a formal congressional declaration of war would clarify the administration's aims sufficiently that the nation might fully unite behind the President's plans. Korea and Vietnam, the paper reminded readers, were both fought without formal declarations of war and both were divisive: the United States 'won' neither conflict, and 'troops were sent to die or molder in prison camps with no clear idea of what they were fighting for'. The headline story concluded that:

> The US Constitution is clear: Only Congress has the right to commit US troops to offensive action. If America isn't united behind the President, then American boys shouldn't be committed to battle. And if they are committed to battle, then America should fight to win. Both Congress and the President's feet should be held to the constitutional fire.[81]

This mounting criticism simply galvanised Bush's conviction that the crisis had to be concluded sooner rather than later. Having been under extreme pressure from an adversarial Democrat-controlled Capitol Hill all through October, Bush had already been forced to break his election mantra – 'read my lips: no new taxes' – in order to strike a compromise deal with legislators over the budget. Much to his disgruntlement, he continued to face accusations that he was only focussing so much upon Kuwait in an effort to shift America's attention away from his domestic travails. With opinion polls suggesting yet another slide in domestic support for his handling of the Persian Gulf crisis, Bush knew that he could not sustain even moderate

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[81] 'Only Congress Can Declare War', *The Detroit News* editorial, 26th October 1990.

domestic support for keeping US troops stationed in the Persian Gulf for any length of time.[82] 'We must get this over with. The longer it goes, the longer the erosion', he noted in his diary. Bush's key ally, Prime Minister Thatcher was of a similar mind and she strongly encouraged Bush to move things forward. She reminded the President that the longer the crisis dragged on, the greater the likelihood that Washington would lose its Middle Eastern allies and, thus, much of the legitimacy for maintaining allied troops in the Gulf. Furthermore, since military action appeared increasingly likely to be the only solution to the crisis anyway, she declared that 'it was better to go to war on our terms.'[83]

Bush concurred and he took a decisive decision in a 30th October White House meeting on the crisis. It was a decision which pushed the United States towards military confrontation with Iraq. Having heard NSA Scowcroft present the various questions facing the Bush White House at this point in the crisis (should the US seek to use force along with willing allies if there was no support in the Security Council for the administration's new draft UN resolution? What should be done to placate a nervous Israel, as tensions continued to mount in the Middle East?), CJS Powell was then asked to present the options for switching America's projected military strategy from a *defensive* operation (one of merely defending Saudi Arabia) to an *offensive* one, tasked with actually ejecting Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Powell's detailing of the military operation his planning team had constructed evoked one immediate question from NSA Scowcroft: 'What size force are we talking about?' Powell's response – around 450,000 troops; more than a doubling of the current deployment – drew gasps from all of the assembled officials, save from the

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[82] Michael Oreskes, 'Bush Trying a New Topic. Is Talk of War Driven by Policy or Politics?' *New York Times*, 31st October, 1990; Mueller (1994), p. 19. See also Bush & Scowcroft (1998), pp. 379-380.
[83] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), pp. 382 & 384-385.

President himself. After having been told what the 'liberation of Kuwait' would take in terms of manpower, Powell recalls that Bush responded without even blinking. He asked one final time whether Powell was 'really sure' that the liberation of Kuwait could not be achieved through the use of airpower alone. Powell, who later admitted that he represented both 'the ghost of Vietnam' and 'the ghost of Beirut' sitting at the policymaking table, responded by saying that only combining air power with a massive ground assault would come close to guaranteeing the outcome that Bush was looking for. This answer seemed to galvanise the President, who effectively gave Powell permission to proceed with preparations for a military offensive with just three words: 'Okay, do it'.[84]

With the administration's draft UN resolution near-completed and ready to be circulated to America's key allies in the UN, the Bush team agreed that if the resolution was accepted by the allies in the Security Council, Saddam Hussein should then be issued with a public ultimatum to withdraw his forces from Kuwait or have them evicted – legitimately – by force.[85] The Bush team earmarked 1st February 1991 as a possible cut-off date for withdrawal.

With those two momentous decisions, the pathway of President Bush's Persian Gulf policy was now unmistakeably clear – if things did *not* change and Iraqi forces remained in Kuwait, US forces would go to war in three months time. All that was needed in the meantime was to sell the UN resolution to the allies and – perhaps more challenging – to rally American behind the possibility of military confrontation with Iraq.[86]

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[84] *PBS Frontline* interview with Colin Powell. See also Powell (1995), pp. 488-489.
[85] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 229-230.
[86] Powell (1995), pp. 488-489.

Military escalation, increasing domestic resistance and War Powers pressure

President Bush may have set the cogs in motion for military action; however, he had done very little to develop domestic support for this recourse.[87] Indeed, he found over the next two months or so that the domestic challenges associated with the Persian Gulf crisis were, in many ways, more complicated than the complex international diplomacy and military coalition building he had led so skilfully.[88] Almost immediately after the decisive White House meeting on the crisis, rumours began circulating around Washington over Pentagon plans to move a further 100,000 US troops from Europe to the Persian Gulf. These troops would supplement the approximately 200,000 American service personnel already in the region. Referring to the escalation, *The Washington Post* stated that President Bush was moving the United States far beyond a stance of 'deterrent posturing'; this latest White House troop escalation was, it declared, 'clearly a move towards war fighting'.[89] White House officials continued to deny these accusations. However, despite the administration's repeated public proclamations to the contrary, *The Washington Times* ran (on 2nd November) a front-page headline declaring: 'Bush prepares the country for war'.[90]

As the American media continued to refer to an imminent war, the Bush administration continued to face accusations from political and media critics of sending out 'conflicting messages about its intentions in the Gulf'.[91] Public approval

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[87] Freedman & Karsh (1994), p. 209.
[88] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 357.
[89] See for example, David Hoffman, 'US Raises the Pressure and The Risks', *The Washington Post*, 31st October, 1990.
[90] Michel McQueen, 'Bush Says Tough Talk on Iraq is to Keep American People Focused on Gulf Crisis', *The Wall Street Journal*, 2nd November, 1990; Paul Bedard, 'Bush Prepares the Country for War', *The Washington Times*, 2nd November, 1990.
[91] Michel McQueen, 'Bush Says Tough Talk on Iraq is to Keep American People Focused on Gulf Crisis', *The Wall Street Journal*, 2nd November, 1990.

for the President's handling of the crisis continued to fall slowly. Having enjoyed ratings of around 80% after his initial response to Iraq's invasion, public endorsement of Bush would slide to a low of around 50% over the coming month. As a 'Vietnam-style antiwar movement' grew across America, Bush found his public speeches interrupted by anti-war protesters. For some observers, it seemed that the echoes of the Vietnam years were palpable.[92]

Bush felt privately frustrated at how his performance was being perceived. He was particularly angry at the criticism he was receiving over the budget compromises he had made, compromises that he thought were necessary simply 'to keep the government open'. Some of the administration's press conferences during this time were heated affairs, and administration figures repeatedly 'bristled' in response to journalists' accusations that the administration was continuing to focus so much on Kuwait due to the President's poor domestic showings and continuing Republican divisions over his budget compromises.[93] The President's spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater, tried to warn Americans against letting these domestic wrangles drag attention away from a serious international crisis in the Persian Gulf; we 'want the American people to stay with the situation, to continue to focus on it, to understand all the options', he declared, 'If we do have to take dramatic action, we want them [the American people] to be ready.' [94]

However, deployment-sceptics continued to criticise the President's *over-readiness* for conflict and these critics seemed to be actively searching for any sign of it. In a telling example of the fine line he was walking in publicly speaking about the crisis under this laser-like focus, Bush publicly vented his frustrations over Baghdad's

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[92] Mueller (1994), p. 21; Nicholas M. Horrock, 'For Bush, Period of Bluffing is Over', *The Chicago Tribune*, 2nd December, 1990. See also Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 371.
[93] Ibid, p. 380.
[94] Michel McQueen, 'Bush Says Tough Talk on Iraq is to Keep American People Focused on Gulf Crisis', *The Wall Street Journal*, 2nd November, 1990.

refusal to allow shipments of food into a beleaguered US Embassy in Kuwait. When he was questioned about this, and about the treatment of American and British hostages in Iraq and Kuwait, the President Bush responded with anger, declaring 'I've had it'. Bush's statement must have triggered the media's hair-sensitive 'conflict radars' because he quickly had to reject media suggestions that his brief outburst was another example of him 'sounding the tocsin for war'. He was merely trying 'to keep the American people focused on the conflict', he assured journalists.[95]

On 8th November, Bush publicly confirmed the rumours and made known the agreement his team had reached during the decisive meeting on 30th October. He publicly announced that 200,000 more US troops were to be deployed to the Persian Gulf. He explained that the escalation was to ensure that the international coalition has 'an adequate *offensive* military option' in the region.[96] Most observers took this announcement as a clear confirmation that the President now had his eye on a possible military confrontation with Iraq.

However, whilst the announcement took the American public by storm, it was also heralded as a 'stunning surprise' for much of the US military hierarchy and also for legislators on Capitol Hill. Indeed, the President's announcement was regarded in a similar way by some key administration officials themselves. Secretary of State James Baker was in Moscow when the deployment announcement was made, meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in what *The Washington Post* described as 'one of the most intense rounds of diplomacy yet in the Persian Gulf crisis.' Eager to win support from a divided Kremlin for the administration's draft UN resolution (the Gorbachev administration was split roughly along 'pro-Arab' and 'pro-American' lines in its view of how Iraq should be dealt with), Baker had strongly advised against

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Bush quote cited in Powell (1995), p. 489 (emphasis in the text).

any announcement of the troop escalation at that particular time.[97] He was 'furious' when he heard the announcement, asserting that it looked as if the White House had made up its mind on a military option even as he (Baker) was engaged in delicate diplomacy aimed, ostensibly, at manufacturing the diplomatic solution which would make this option unnecessary.[98] It was, Baker later acknowledged, yet another clear sign of the incoherence which had dogged the administration's public handling of the crisis.[99]

Congressional backlash

If Congress had been decrying President Bush's imperious handling of the crisis before, President Bush's confirmation of the latest troop deployment sparked outrage – General Colin Powell likened the outcry to the 'acrimony of the hawk-dove controversy of the sixties over Vietnam'.[100] Significantly, the deployment had been announced *after* the adjournment of the 101st Congress, thus feeding suspicions that the legislature had been duped. This feeling was nourished by the fact that Bush had met with a legislative consultation group on 30th October and had mentioned nothing of a further deployment.[101] With even senior legislators such as the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn (Dem. GA.) only hearing of the deployment shortly before its formal announcement (Nunn was actually notified by

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[97] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 230-231.
[98] Rick Atkinson & Bon Woodward, 'Gulf Turning Points: Strategy, Diplomacy', *The Washington Post*, 2nd December, 1990. See also Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p. 396.
[99] Baker (1995), pp. 335-337; Paul Bedard, 'Bush Prepares the Country for War.' *The Washington Times*, 2nd November, 1990; Nicholas M. Horrock, 'For Bush, Period of Bluffing is Over'. *The Chicago Tribune*, 2nd December, 1990.
[100] Powell (1995), p. 489.
[101] Grimmett, 1st March, 2007, p. 29.

telephone whilst dining in a restaurant), it seemed that any chance of maintaining a bipartisan consensus over the crisis was now lost. [102]

And so it turned out. Nunn immediately called a series of hearings to critically debate America's Persian Gulf policy and Bush now found himself facing 'furious attacks' from senior Democrats. The President was accused of 'rushing the nation down the path to war without clear justification to the American public or reciprocal commitments from allied Arab nations.' Warning that 'this could easily turn into a war of the Arab nations versus the United States', Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Claiborne Pell (Dem. RI) stated in an *NBC* interview that 'We don't wish to be the sole policeman in that part of the world…I'm not sure the American people want to take on that responsibility.'[103] Appearing on CBS's *Face the Nation*, Senator Nunn invoked Vietnam as he issued a stark warning to Bush:

> The last thing we need is to have a war over there, a bloody war, and have American boys being sent and brought back in body bags and yet not have the American people behind them…We've gone that route one time. We don't want to do it again.[104]

The Bush administration responded by emphasising the priority of security for American troops stationed in the Gulf, and by highlighting the measured stability of the administration's Persian Gulf policy.[105] It also sought to assuage congressional anger by re-emphasising its willingness to include Congress in its policy deliberations. In a letter to congressional leaders on 16th November, President Bush

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[102] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 210-211.
[103] Bush and Scowcroft (1998), p. 396. See also, Michael Weisskopf, 'Democrats Criticize Gulf Policy', *The Washington Post*, 12th November 1990.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Nicholas M. Horrock, 'For Bush, Period of Bluffing is Over', *The Chicago Tribune*, 2nd December, 1990.

emphasised that 'the mission of our Armed Forces has not changed', and that he looked forward to 'continued consultation and cooperation' with Congress over US policy in the Gulf. However, Bush simultaneously *rejected* congressional demands for an enactment of the War Powers Resolution, stressing (though he can hardly have believed it himself) that he 'did not believe that involvement in hostilities was imminent'. Bush also reminded legislators that his stand against Baghdad was not unilateral but was representative of a widespread global concern over Iraq's aggression.[106]

The President's assurances did little to quell legislative dissent as the prospect of a war without congressional authority appeared to loom ever larger. Representative Ron Dellums (Dem. CA) led forty four other Democrats in seeking a judicial order instructing President Bush against offensive military actions as part of *Operation Desert Shield*, unless he had first consulted with, and received authorisation from, Congress as per the War Powers Act. It was a challenge which would falter by mid-December, when Federal District Judge Harold H. Greene denied the injunction. Greene justified his denial by declaring that a congressional majority had *not* been behind the Dellums proposal and that the move was not ready for judicial determination anyway, given that the President had not yet demonstrated sufficient commitment to military action. However, Greene's ruling simultaneously rejected the Justice Department's request that President Bush be granted full presidential war powers, arguing that if the President

> …had the sole power to determine that any particular offensive military operation, no matter how vast, does not constitute war-making but only an offensive military

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[106] George H. W. Bush (1990), 'Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Deployment of Additional United States Armed Forces to the Persian Gulf', 16th November, 1990. See also, Grimmett, 1st March, 2007, pp. 25-26.

> attack, the congressional power to declare war will be at the mercy of a semantic decision by the Executive. Such an 'interpretation' would evade the plain language of the Constitution, and it cannot stand.[107]

Greene's decision may have been both strict and principled in tone; however, there is little doubt that the 'nightmare' scenario he postulated – that the formal status of US military operations would be determined by how any given operation was defined by the President – was already an established convention, something which President Bush's ongoing refusal to enact the War Powers Act surely demonstrated. Ultimately, both the Dellums challenge and Greene's decision did nothing to help congressional dissenters rein in a Persian Gulf policy which, for all the legislative bluster, was now in full flow and entirely under the control of the White House.

Success at the United Nations: military force *will* be used against Iraq if necessary

Having undertaken vigorous diplomatic efforts to secure Security Council support for its draft resolution during the previous two months, the Bush administration's efforts finally bore fruit. On 29th November 1990, Resolution 678 passed overwhelmingly through the Security Council – only Cuba and Yemen voted against it; China abstained. Resolution 678 specified that Iraq had 'one final opportunity, one final pause for goodwill' to comply with the various UN resolutions it already faced. If it had not done so by 15th January 1991, 'member states cooperating with the government of Kuwait' were now authorised to use 'all necessary means' to restore

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[107] Ibid; Fisher & Gray Adler (1998), pp. 13-14.

peace and security in the area. In a later unilateral statement on behalf of the United States, Secretary of State Baker clarified that 'all necessary means' essentially meant the use of military force.[108]

This development now delivered the strong warning to Baghdad that the Bush administration had long desired. It also took considerable pressure off the President himself. Not only were his efforts to set in place a 'liberating' international military coalition now legitimised by due international process; the clock was now officially ticking for Baghdad to withdraw its forces or face – legitimately – the ultimate international sanction. The crisis would now be brought to a head, one way of the other.

The passing of Resolution 678 also provided the Bush White House with a platform on which to step up its public diplomatic offensive at home. It was a development which was badly needed, as the administration had long been aware of its poor public relations on the crisis. A White House Gulf Policy Communications Plan designated an array of 'opportunity groups' which the Bush administration should now target if it was to 'sell' war-fighting operations in the Persian Gulf. The plan also stressed the need to 'focus all the appropriate resources of the Administration' on selling its policy to the public and that:

> The message that the President has gone to historic lengths to avoid war (economic embargo and ten UN resolutions) and garnered unprecedented international support should be a fundamental component of all outreach activity.[109]

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[108] Freedman & Karsh (1994), pp. 233-234; Mueller (1994), p. 19. The Bush administration had to compromise on the wording of Resolution 678 – it had wanted it to contain plain language which clearly mentioned 'the use of force' but Moscow insisted on a toned-down version. 'All necessary means' (rather than 'the use of force') was the wording that Washington and Moscow both eventually compromised on but the White House was clearly keen to let everyone know precisely what that meant. See Powell (1995), p. 489.

[109] Bush Presidential Records, White House Office of Public Affairs, Kristen Gear files: 'Communications Plan – Gulf Policy', [OA/ID 03417], BPL.

In an extended press conference on 30th November, President Bush sought to push these buttons and also to dispel the Vietnam Syndrome. He began by drawing attention to the 'aggression' and 'brutality' of Saddam Hussein, a 'dangerous dictator who has weapons of mass destruction and is seeking new ones'. He then openly raised the subject of Vietnam. Assuring the nation that 'this will not be another Vietnam', he proceeded to tell Americans that:

> This will not be a protracted, drawn-out war. The forces arrayed are different. The opposition is different. The topography of Kuwait is different. And the motivation of our all-volunteer force is superb. And I pledge to you: There will not be any murky ending. If one American soldier has to go into battle, that soldier will have enough force behind him to win and then get out as soon as possible. I will never-ever-agree to a halfway effort. [110]

Bush's willingness to engage with this topic at this time of seemingly imminent hostilities represents a striking moment in the White House's 'relationship' with the Vietnam Syndrome. Allusion to various elements of the Vietnam experience are unmistakeable in Bush's speech and demonstrate a clear effort on the part of the President to convince Americans that various widely-recognised features of America's Vietnam experience – challenging physical terrain, under-motivated American troops (alluding to the commonly voiced perception that American troops fighting in Vietnam were unsure about precisely what they were fighting for), the lack of domestic backing for American soldiers, and the 'halfway' effort of the American government to formulate a policy that was militarily and morally defendable – would be absent from any conflict that he might command in the Persian Gulf. In the

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[110] Bush Presidential Records, White House Office of Public Affairs, Kristen Gear files, POTUS remarks/Persian Gulf: 'Press Conference By The President', [OA/ID 03418], BPL.

following question-and-answer session with journalists, Bush was pressed repeatedly over the likelihood that US forces would incur casualties. When questioned on how the parents of American service personnel would feel about casualties, Bush responded that he had deliberately 'added that language [to his speech] this morning about how this will not be another Vietnam', because 'that question weighs on my mind.'[111]

Despite the vehemence of Bush's sentiments, opinion polls suggested that he was still not bringing the American public along with him to any significant degree. The ongoing military deployments to the region, significant congressional resistance, and the extent to which prominent public and political figures were publicly airing their concerns over these issues, kept Bush's approval ratings lingering at only around 50%.[112] The Vietnam Syndrome was, it seemed, still very much in evidence despite the President's best efforts.

Hammering out a consensus…and Vietnam fears

December saw the possibility of conflict taking on a semblance of inevitability, as Saddam Hussein continued to display a seemingly bewildering indifference to the withdrawal deadline specified by UN Resolution 678; 'In the Pentagon', *The Washington Post* reported, 'civilians and military officers talk increasingly of the

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[111] Ibid.
[112] Data taken from *Gallup poll monthly*, December 1990 & *New York Times*/CBS poll releases, cited in Mueller (1994), tables 8 & 9, pp. 193-194.

coming war'.[113] Predictably, the growing assumption of imminent hostilities increased talk of Vietnam and the Bush administration worked ever harder as politicians and journalists expressed fears over the battle to come. Arnold Isaacs notes that in press conferences during this period, President Bush and senior administration officials 'came close to sounding frantic' in their repeated efforts to dispel the Vietnam Syndrome; in delivering one press statement, Bush repeated *three times* that Iraq would not be 'another Vietnam' – his statement was just seven sentences long.[114]

The 102nd Congress reconvened on 4th January 1991, just 11 days before the UN-designated withdrawal deadline for Iraqi forces. On the 8th, Bush sent a letter to congressional leaders, requesting a congressional resolution in support of UN Resolution 678, sanctioning the use of 'all necessary means' to liberate Kuwait from occupying Iraqi forces. Stepping up the emotional pressure on legislative members to support actions which were clearly going to unfold anyway, Bush stressed that he was working to 'protect America's security' and that he could 'think of no better way than for Congress to express its support for the President at this critical time.' However, as Richard Grimmett comments, it is significant to note that Bush's request at this point was actually for congressional support for *participation in the operation* and not for authorisation for the military actions which the operation demanded.[115] His notice to Congress was thus, for all its formal courtesy, very much in keeping with the executive dominance which had hitherto characterised his stewardship of the crisis.

Despite stepping up its lip service to legislative collaboration – Secretary of State James Baker publicly asserted that 'I must go to Baghdad with the full support

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[113] Rick Atkinson & Bon Woodward, 'Gulf Turning Points: Strategy, Diplomacy', *The Washington Post*, 2nd December, 1990.
[114] Bush's press conference cited in Isaacs (1997), p. 76; no source provided.
[115] Grimmett, March 1, 2007, p. 26.

of the Congress and of the American people…we couldn't use force in the face of explicit congressional disapproval' – the White House's policy guardedness vis-à-vis Congress continued apace. It was vividly evident at a press conference on 9th January where President Bush faced reporters' questions over his administration's unwillingness to include Congress in the planning process. Brushing aside repeated journalists' questions about Vietnam – he repeated once again that Kuwait 'won't be another Vietnam' – Bush responded to a question over whether he thought he needed a use-of-force resolution from Congress and whether he would be bound to any resolution enacted on Capitol Hill.[116] Bush responded that he didn't think he needed any formal authorisation from Congress – 'I have the authority to fully implement the United Nations resolutions' – adding that he had had this confirmed by 'many attorneys'.[117]

Despite yet another White House rebuff, there was some vocal criticism on Capitol Hill – but little else. Just three days later, both Houses passed the 'Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution' (PL 102-1). Contained within its various sections was an emphasis upon the continuing relevance of the War Powers Resolution and the requirement that the President should report to Congress every 60 days. However, Bush's unflinching conviction in his executive privilege was evident in the statement he made after he had signed the Resolution into law:

> As I made clear to congressional leaders at the outset, my request for congressional support did not, and my signing of this resolution does not, constitute any change in the long-standing positions of the executive branch on either the President's

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[116] Baker (1995), pp. 340 & 337. Also, George H. W. Bush, 'The President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf Crisis', 9th January, 1991.
[117] Grimmett (March 1, 2007), p. 26.

constitutional authority to use the armed forces to defend vital US interests or the constitutionality of the War Powers Resolution.[118]

The passing of the deadline and the onset of *Operation Desert Storm*

With the passing of the 15th January UN deadline for an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, President Bush formally announced the commencement of allied air-strikes against Iraqi forces. In an address from the Oval Office, on the evening of 16th January, he stated that:

> While the world waited, Saddam Hussein systematically raped, pillaged, and plundered a tiny nation, no threat to his own. He subjected the people of Kuwait to unspeakable atrocities and among those maimed and murdered, innocent children. While the world waited, Saddam sought to add to the chemical weapons arsenal he now possesses, an infinitely more dangerous weapon of mass destruction – a nuclear weapon. While the world waited, while Saddam stalled, more damage was being done to the fragile economies of the Third World, emerging democracies of Eastern Europe, to the entire world, including to our own economy.[119]

Having extended his vilification of Saddam Hussein to (rather improbably) the impact that Iraq's action was having on the Third World and the global economy, Bush sought once more to address America's Vietnam fears. He declared that 'our objectives are clear': he accentuated the idea of executive-legislative conciliation and

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[118] Ibid, p. 27.
[119] George H. W. Bush, 'Address to the Nation Announcing Allied Military Action in the Persian Gulf', 16th January, 1990.

solidarity by emphasising the 'resolute action' taken by Congress in its 'historic debate' over what to do about Iraq; and he dispelled any existing fears of American isolation on the issue by stating that 'twenty eight nations…stand shoulder to shoulder against Saddam Hussein.' He then explicitly addressed perhaps the most emotive elements of all:

> Prior to ordering our forces into battle, I instructed our military commanders to take every necessary step to prevail as quickly as possible, and with the greatest degree of protection possible for American and allied service men and women. I've told the American people before that this will not be another Vietnam, and I repeat this here tonight. Our troops will have the best possible support in the entire world, and they will not be asked to fight with one hand tied behind their back. I'm hopeful that this fighting will not go on for long and that casualties will be held to an absolute minimum.[120]

Bush's assurances to America took place amidst a sea-change in the nation's perspective of the crisis, and an apparent submission to the imperious leadership that Bush had been so roundly criticised for in the previous months. Despite the Bush administration's prolonged inability to galvanise broad public-political support for its Persian Gulf policy, Americans' concerns over the crisis appeared to dissipate in the face of a broad welling of national support for the US forces stationed in the Persian Gulf, at the brink of war. Despite the considerable 'presence' of the Vietnam Syndrome in the months leading up to the onset of hostilities in Iraq – a presence which seemed intimately linked to America's apparently lukewarm support for US military action in the Persian Gulf – by the time US forces engaged Iraqi Republican

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[120] Ibid.

Guard units, more than 80% of Americans polled declared that they now backed President Bush's decision to use force.[121]

Conclusion

President Bush's response to, and stewardship of, the Persian Gulf crisis is very much in keeping with the model of presidential use-of-force dominance depicted in this thesis. Indeed, his 'performance' during this period has much in common with that of President Reagan as he responded to the Lebanese conflict. Like Reagan, Bush faced the Vietnam Syndrome as he tried to rally Americans behind the deployment of US forces. Like Reagan, Bush was fully aware of America's Vietnam sensitivities and he tried to dispel Vietnam's shadows in his efforts to sway public, political and media opinion behind the decision to deploy. As was also the case with his predecessor, Bush's own sensitivity to the Vietnam Syndrome did not dampen his willingness to deploy US forces.

Bush was perfectly willing to utilise his powers as Commander-in-Chief and ignore the wishes of deployment-opponents by ordering US forces to the Persian Gulf. Having set the deployment in motion, he then strove to offer persuasive justifications for his actions, at times by offering what appeared to be quite unrealistic rationales. Aside from trying to tie Iraq's invasion to impact that this action might have on the global economy, Bush also strove to depict Saddam Hussein as a tyrannical political leader who could be likened to Hitler. Bush did not have to do much to demonise Saddam Hussein in the collective mind of the American public;

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[121] Data taken from *Gallup poll monthly*, February 1991, cited in Mueller (1994), Table 8, p. 193.

however, his attempts to draw parallels between Hussein and Hitler were clearly questionable and they did not have the impact that Bush may have expected. Indeed, some within the Bush 'inner-circle' saw this strategy as quite unhelpful and the President was advised, at least once, to 'tone down' his Hitler references.[122]

However, whilst domestic critics consistently levelled accusations of belligerence against the Bush White House over its response to Iraq's invasion, Bush's deployment decision-making was far from the reckless warmongering that some critics tried to depict. In fact, whilst he was leaning towards a military response from early on in the crisis, Bush's thinking on precisely what form this response should entail seemed very much influenced by the Vietnam Syndrome. Indeed, whilst the President and his military chiefs initially disagreed over what the appropriate military strategy should be in the Gulf, both sides' perspectives were predicated upon a wish for a quick victory and casualty avoidance – it just so happens that Bush thought that an air campaign could achieve these aims whilst the chiefs opted for a more comprehensive air and ground strategy. President Bush's respect for General Colin Powell saw him defer to the latter option. Unquestionably, in Bush and Powell, *Operation Desert Storm* was presided over by two astute policy practitioners who had the prudence associated with the Vietnam Syndrome etched indelibly in their minds. One could argue that *Desert Storm* remains the archetypal 'overwhelming force' approach which American conservatives and the Pentagon have championed since the end of the Vietnam War.

Bush was a pragmatic and proficient leader when it came to crisis foreign policymaking; more 'hands-on' than Reagan, and more attuned to the details and ramifications of policy. Whilst there were differences in opinion within his 'inner-

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[122] Powell (1995), p. 491.

circle' over how to respond to the invasion of Kuwait, these disagreements were slight when compared to the very public rifts which characterised the Reagan administration's policy deliberations over Lebanon. If there *were* failings in Bush's 'performance' throughout this episode, it was the consistent lack of synchronicity between policymaking and public diplomacy as he sought to send an aggressive message of warning to Iraq whilst simultaneously emphasising peace and diplomacy to his domestic audience. This dual public diplomatic task was, admittedly, an extremely challenging one.

The study's focus upon public diplomacy clearly exposes the difficulties that the Bush White House experienced in trying to 'sell' its Persian Gulf policy to America. However, it also illuminates the imperiousness of Bush's handling of the crisis, throughout this period. Winning public-political support was clearly *not* a prerequisite for his key decisions on the crisis and the staged force deployments continued apace, even as America grew more and more critical. This demonstrates unmistakeably that at such times, it is ultimately what the President wants which decides whether or not US forces are deployed. Every President wants to take domestic opinion with him but winning this support is an aim, *not* a must. This was made quite clear during the course of President Bush's response to the Persian Gulf crisis.

There is no doubt that President Bush ably assumed the role of Commander-in-Chief during this crisis. He achieved a tremendous feat in garnering and maintaining the international coalition which eventually engaged Iraqi forces in the Persian Gulf; indeed, for some commentators, his handling of the Persian Gulf crisis

should be 'a case study on coalition building for years, if not decades, to come'.[123] Notwithstanding his limitations in garnering domestic support, Bush proved himself to be extremely proficient in orchestrating his foreign policy team and the decision-making process. He pushed the military chiefs to move beyond their instinctive intervention-scepticism and ordered them to assemble a range of military strategies for possible action against Iraq. The chiefs were under no doubt as to Bush's commitment to the mission. However despite his authoritative stance, Bush was no officious Commander-in-Chief. He proved himself more than willing to have the military chiefs' expertise and opinions at the centre of the planning process and indeed the military plan itself. If his predecessor had been criticised for letting his exceptionalist belief in America's 'mission' influence his use-of-force thinking, Bush stewarded a military strategy from a rational analysis of the events, the terrain and the perceived strength of the Iraqi military. He did not copy President Reagan's approach of trying to limit the number of troops he sent into danger. Instead, once Bush had been persuaded by Powell's argument that ground forces *would* have to be employed and in sufficient numbers to 'win decisively', Bush reportedly responded with an assurance, 'if that's what you need, we'll do it'.[124] The Bush approach – prudence, careful build-up and an 'overwhelming force' approach when the battle was eventually unleashed – demonstrated a very different presidential response to the Vietnam Syndrome, one which believed that America's Vietnam fears might indeed be dissipated by seeing a rallying US military victory but that it was *victory* itself, and not the mere symbolism of sending US forces into action, which would achieve this goal.

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[123] Jackson (2000), pp. 243 & 216. For the quote on Bush's handling of the Persian Gulf crisis, see: PBS Frontline interview with Barnard Taylor (accessed 29/03/06), available at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/trainor/1.html

[124] Bob Woodward (1991), *The Commanders*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 319-320.

As was the case with President Reagan *vis-à-vis* Lebanon, Bush's position with respect to Congress over the Persian Gulf crisis was nothing short of imperious. As Ryan Hendrickson notes, at no time during the crisis did Bush recognize any legal authority for Congress on the issue of deploying US forces.[125] Whilst he did pay considerable lip service to generating bipartisan legislative support for both the deployment *and* the subsequent hostilities with Iraqi forces, Bush rejected any concession to congressional input into the planning process. Bush held the view that since he would not 'win over every last congressman, or the last American' anyway, he should 'rely upon my conviction about what is right and just to guide me.'[126] This statement – they are Bush's own words – is a vivid demonstration of how the perspective of *just one man* can largely dictate whether and how US forces will be deployed. That the President can draw such conclusions, and that he can act upon them without any serious opposition from the nation's elected legislature, is a clear demonstration of the extent to which use-of-force authority resides well and truly in the White House.

This unmistakeable location of power could also be seen to sit uneasily with what many would deem to be the 'democratic ideal'. Given the authoritative equivalence that the constitution and the 1973 War Powers Resolutions are *supposed* to facilitate between the White House and Capitol Hill, it seems incredible to note that President Bush (i) committed hundreds of thousands of US troops to a war-zone, and (ii) assumed leadership of an international coalition in a waiting game in which war was the recognised end-point, *without serious consultation with, or input from, Capitol Hill.* Whilst it may well be the case that Congress and the Supreme Court are able to hold the President accountable for any military missions which go seriously

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[125] Hendrickson, (1998), p. 251.
[126] Bush & Scowcroft (1998), p357.

awry, any such actions would be *ex post facto*, with the deployment in question having already been ordered by the White House. Whilst this may well act to deter any seriously wayward presidential use-of-force actions, the ability of the legislature to encroach upon the President *before the deployment*, and to do so in a way which might actually arrest it, appears to be *most* unlikely.

Just as incredible, in the face of this effective marginalisation of the legislature, is the announcement from the Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs – Dante Fascell (Dem. FL) – as hostilities unfolded in the Persian Gulf: he declared that 'the War Powers Resolution is alive and well.'[127] Congress may well ultimately have fulfilled its role in providing President Bush with both money and formal authority for the use of military force against Iraq. However, given that America's Persian Gulf policy had unfolded exclusively at the behest of President Bush and his 'inner-circle', and given that Bush's 'consultations' with Congress were done entirely at his own discretion and were decried as inadequate by legislators throughout the entire crisis, Fascell's declaration appears to be nothing short of bizarre.

In terms of the broader domestic arena, President Bush appeared to be more concerned with winning the public opinion battle than did President Reagan during his engagement with Lebanon. Even so, it is clear that Bush failed in his task and that he did *not* push the United States towards war on the back of broad congressional and public support. John Mueller contends that the best the Bush White House was able to do was 'arrest a deterioration' of the support that President Bush had garnered for his *initial* handling of the crisis and then hang on until the inevitable 'rally-round-the-flag' effect kicked in and galvanised broad support amongst Americans, as US troops

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[127] Fascell cited in Grimmett, 1st March 2007, p. 27.

stood at the brink of battle. The onset of hostilities did indeed generate a broad welling of support but it was not a level of domestic backing which the Bush administration managed to achieve through its own public diplomatic efforts.[128]

The 'rallying effect' which typically evidences itself at this point is a significant phenomenon in the politics of military intervention in the United States. It may do much to sustain the imperiousness which Presidents often appear to demonstrate as they take deployment decisions. It means that a President can be confident that he will *ultimately* garner domestic support for a force deployment, even if America initially appears to oppose this action and even if his own efforts to persuade the nation are unsuccessful. If Presidents can make such assumptions, then it may effectively eradicate 'public-political opposition' from the list of 'checks and balances' which are supposed to restrain foreign policy decision-making in a liberal democracy such as the United States. The American public's support for a force deployment will very likely change if the deployment in question prolongs, or if it starts to go awry. However, this goes for 'popular' as well as 'unpopular' deployments.

The Vietnam Syndrome *was* a considerable preoccupation for President Bush but it did not stop him from sanctioning the largest US force deployment – and US war-fighting operation – since Vietnam. Bush's interpretation of Vietnam's 'lessons' did, however, compel him to try and ensure, firstly; that he avoided involving US forces in an open-ended Vietnam-style military commitment, and secondly; that he would assuage domestic fears and opposition so that his Persian Gulf commitment would avoid the morale-sapping domestic unrest which had so undermined America's Vietnam endeavour.

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[128] Mueller (1994), p. 116.

Whilst Bush triumphantly declared, in the victorious aftermath of *Operation Desert Storm*, that America had 'kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all', there is considerable evidence to suggest that President Reagan was not the only 'anti-Syndrome' President who failed to persuade Americans on this issue.[129] Numerous subsequent opinion polls suggested that neither the lightening victory in the Persian Gulf, nor the American media's often-fawning coverage of America's new stealth aircraft and precision missiles, had actually *increased* Americans' willingness to see greater US military activity on the world stage. Indeed, just two days after Bush's buoyant declaration about the Vietnam Syndrome's demise, polls asking Americans whether the easy victory in the Persian Gulf made them feel that the White House should be more willing to use military force in order to solve international problems drew a striking response; around 60% of respondents answered 'No'.[130]

Significantly, some commentators have speculated that President Bush himself may not have genuinely believed that either the Vietnam Syndrome or America's conflict-aversions were confined to history. Jeffrey Record contends that the speed with which Bush withdrew US forces from the Persian Gulf – rejecting the chance to move to Baghdad in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein – is confirmation that Bush feared US forces could be 'sucked into a bloody Arab quagmire.'[131] As will be shown in the next chapter, Bush may have been willing to declare the Syndrome 'kicked' in the aftermath of Kuwait. However it would not take him long, with an entirely new type of conflict looming on the horizon, to publicly announce its resurrection.

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[129] E. J. Dionne, 'Kicking the "Vietnam Syndrome"; Victory Sweeps Away U.S. Doomed-to-Failure Feeling', *The Washington Post*, 4th March, 1991.
[130] Poll quoted in Kenneth Oye, Donald Lieber & Donald Rothchild (1992), *Eagle in a New World: American Grand Strategy in the post-Cold War Era*, New York: Harper Collins, pp. 66-67. Cited in McCrisken (2003), p. 152.
[131] Record (2002), p. 104-105.

Chapter 6

The Return of the Vietnam Syndrome:

The Clinton Administration and the War in Bosnia Herzegovina, 1993-1995

The previous two chapters detailed the deliberations, public diplomacy and leadership of post-Vietnam Presidents who had decided to deploy US ground forces to a high-profile international conflict. The role of the Vietnam Syndrome in influencing these processes, and the ways in these Presidents publicly 'dealt' with the Vietnam Syndrome, was explored. This chapter also focuses upon these issues but it differs in one key respect; namely, that the conflict under focus was one to which, for a considerable period of time, the White House was *opposed* to deploying US forces.

The ending of the Cold War changed many of the dynamics and normative expectations of international politics. It also prompted the White House to stop viewing every international conflict as one in which US military involvement – whether overtly or covertly – might be necessary. Absent the driving imperatives of the fight against global Communism, the ethnic conflicts which emerged in the immediate post-Cold War years were thus viewed very differently to how they might have been just a few years earlier. Presidents typically regarded them not as events which required some form of US involvement but as perilous killing fields which were best avoided.

Despite the fact that America's post-Vietnam deployment-aversions were by now an established fact, this White House non-interventionism was often heavily

criticised by sections of the American public-political arena. As Western media organisations broadcast harrowing reports of the plight of civilians caught up in conflicts, many political, media and non-governmental actors – in the United States and beyond – viewed American military involvement in such crises as both politically feasible *and* morally appropriate to the optimistic liberal values of the new post-Cold War international order. Unsurprisingly perhaps, these demands reinvigorated the Vietnam Syndrome and spawned a new array of debates in Washington over how the US military should be used in the post-Cold War world. This chapter charts the most prominent of these events, as the conflict in the former Yugoslav Republic of Bosnia Herzegovina captured America's attention in 1992.

Clinton, Vietnam and the use of military force

William Jefferson Clinton succeeded George H. W. Bush to become the 42nd President of the United States. The first Democratic President since Jimmy Carter, Clinton assumed office on 20th January, 1993. Whilst twenty years had elapsed since the Vietnam War, the subject featured heavily during Clinton's presidency, especially during his first term. Indeed, it was a major issue for him even *before* he took office.[1] As he ran against Bush during the 1992 election campaign, Clinton was forced to address two key issues which threatened to undermine his candidacy: one of these concerned his political party; the other was more personal. Both were directly linked to the Vietnam War.

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[1] Roper (2000), p. 177; McCrisken (2003), p. 163; Bacevich (2005), p. 118; Herspring (2005), p. 335.

Whilst it was America's 'economic pain' which largely dominated the 1992 election campaign, foreign policy issues – most notably, the spiralling conflict in Bosnia Herzegovina – also came under the spotlight.[2] With an ongoing recession limiting President Bush's scope to woo the electorate over his domestic competence, and given Clinton's glaring foreign policy inexperience, the Bush campaign team seized upon the opportunity to publicly challenge Clinton's foreign policy credentials. Drawing American voters' memories back to the Vietnam years, Republicans accused Clinton of representing the party which had taken the United States into Vietnam's conflict and helped steer US forces to a humiliating defeat. Only strong Republican leadership had dragged America out of its post-Vietnam nadir, the Bush team argued; Democratic Presidents simply couldn't be trusted with America's foreign policy.[3]

Whilst Clinton's inspired electioneering and strident foreign policy rhetoric were sufficient to best such arguments, his *personal* 'relationship' with the Vietnam War represented a potentially more serious obstacle to his winning the White House. It was widely known that Clinton had been a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University during the Vietnam War and that he had both opposed the war *and* avoided military service. During the election campaign, Bush repeatedly highlighted Clinton's 'Vietnam record', implying that his 'draft-dodging' indicated Clinton's unsuitability for office.[4]

These attacks, and the perceptions which spawned them, did not stop Clinton's election to the White House but they continued to influence the Clinton presidency once he won office. For example, within the Pentagon, many senior military figures viewed the new President as a 'commander in chief drawn from the ranks of the

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[2] Drew (1995), p. 49; Sidney Blumenthal (2003), *The Clinton Wars. An Insider's Account of the White House Years*, Viking, Penguin, p. 60; Janda, Berry & Goldman (2008), p. 633.
[3] Bacevich (2005), p. 118.
[4] Roper (2000), p. 177; Bacevich (2005), p. 118; Herspring (2005), p. 335.

bearded anti-Vietnam War protesters'. Especially during his first term in office, relations between Clinton and the Pentagon were, at times, uncommonly poor.[5] Admittedly, some of Clinton's early policy proposals did little to smooth this relationship. He announced a freeze on military pay and pushed to overturn a policy which prohibited homosexuals from openly serving in the military. Clinton promptly backed down from the latter, after very public dissention from senior military figures. Clinton's 'sloppy' salute was even criticised by some within the military and whilst this was probably never a serious issue, it was deemed serious enough to prompt the National Security Advisor (NSA) Anthony Lake to raise the subject with his Commander-in-Chief.[6]

When looked at in this light, it is perhaps hardly surprising that Clinton – unlike Presidents Bush and Reagan – never explicitly placed the eradication of the Vietnam Syndrome at the very centre of his presidential vision.[7] He did, however, draw attention to the significance of having a Vietnam War protestor such as himself winning election into the White House. During the 1992 election campaign, he suggested that a Clinton victory might show how far America had moved beyond its Vietnam preoccupation.[8] This prediction proved, as had previous similar presidential predictions, to be an underestimation of how enshrined the Vietnam Syndrome was in the American consciousness.

Indeed, there is little doubt that the Vietnam Syndrome was very evident in the thinking of the Clinton foreign policy team itself. Clinton's use-of-force decisions were influenced by advisors and practitioners for whom the Vietnam experience provided stern counsel. General Colin Powell was still Chairman of the Joint Chiefs

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[5] Drew (1995), pp. 42-48; Blumenthal (2003), pp. 52-53 & 60.
[6] Herspring (2005), pp. 335-337.
[7] Record (2002), p. 115; Janda, Berry & Goldman (2008), pp. 377 & 633; Henriksen (1996), p. 4.
[8] McCrisken (2003), p. 163.

of Staff (CJS) when Clinton assumed office and (as had been the case when he had served under President Bush) his opinions and advice continued to define him as almost the 'living embodiment' of the Vietnam Syndrome.[9] Many of Clinton's civilian policy advisors also approached foreign conflicts preoccupied with America's Vietnam fixation. America is 'not prepared for a military involvement reminiscent of Vietnam', Clinton's political advisor Dick Morris repeatedly warned Clinton as he contemplated using military force in Bosnia; 'You don't want to be Lyndon Johnson'. Clinton himself needed no reminder of the Democrats' associations with the Vietnam failure. [10]

If Vietnam sensitivities were palpable within Clinton foreign policy circles, there was no shortage of events to sustain them. On assuming office, Clinton's foreign policy caseload was bursting at the seams. Ongoing violence in Haiti was sustaining a steady flow of refugees towards the Florida coast, 28,000 US troops were overseeing humanitarian operations in war-ravaged Somalia, and the war in Bosnia Herzegovina was commanding international attention. It was the latter conflict which came to truly dominate Clinton's first term in office.

As soon as Bosnia's war came to prominence in Washington, it was perfectly clear that America's 1991 Persian Gulf War victory had *not* 'kicked' the Vietnam Syndrome from the nation's collective consciousness, despite President Bush's public assertion to the contrary.[11] Not only did the Balkan topography allow deployment-

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[9] Record (2002), pp. 104-105 & 114.
[10] McCrisken (2003), pp. 165-166; Thomas H. Henriksen (1996), *Clinton's Foreign Policy in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, and North Korea*, Essays in Public Policy, Hoover Institute on War, Revolution and Peace, p. 15; Chollet (2005), p. 14.
[11] For a range of discussions on the Bosnian War, and various aspects of the West's relationship with it, see, for example: Bob Woodward (1996), *The Choice*, New York: Simon & Schuster; Richard Sobel (1998), 'Trends: United States Intervention in Bosnia', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 2, Summer, 1998; Chuck Sudetic (1998), *Blood and Vengeance*, W.W. Norton; Richard Holbrooke (1999), *To End a War*, Modern Library, New York, revised edition; Ivo Daalder, (2000), *Getting to Dayton. America's Bosnia Policy*, Brookings Institute; Halberstam (2001); Sobel (2001); Allin (2002);

opponents to draw semi-plausible physical comparisons with Vietnam; the war's harrowing violence and its complicated configurations (there were not two but three warring sides – Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats – each supported by 'police' units and un-uniformed paramilitaries) were more than enough to set Vietnam radars buzzing in Washington. This was certainly no 'traditional' battlefield standoff between state armies, as had been the case in the Persian Gulf.

However, whilst halting Bosnia's conflict was undoubtedly a considerable political and military challenge, it was a challenge which proved especially complicated for the Clinton administration. Absent the galvanising parameters which had largely steered the Cold War Presidents, and with no foreign policy experience to speak of, Clinton found it extremely difficult to offer a decisive response to the crisis and his leadership was frequently found wanting.[12] Clinton complained throughout his first term in office about the inadequacies of his foreign policy team but he himself undoubtedly fomented the disjointedness which evidenced itself throughout his administration's engagement with the Bosnian crisis. He seldom attended National Security Council (NSC) meetings and he was equivocal and overly verbose when he did. Clinton left the military chiefs with the impression that their Commander-in-Chief was disproportionately preoccupied with domestic policy *and* that he would prevaricate over crisis foreign policy decisions.[13]

Clinton's stewardship of America's Bosnia policy very much confirmed these concerns. Whilst he had frequently alluded to his interventionist credentials during the 1992 presidential election – he publicly castigated President Bush's inaction over Bosnia, declaring at one point that the United States should join a multinational

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Power (2002); Brendan Simms (2002), *Unfinest Hour. Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia*, Penguin books, second edition; Chollet (2005).

[12] Janda, Berry & Goldman (2008), pp. 377 & 633; Henriksen (1996), p. 4.

[13] DiPrizio (2002), p. 119; Herspring (2005), pp. 332-335.

military coalition and shoot its way into Sarajevo airport in order to relieve that besieged city – it was clear when he took office that whilst he was willing to sanction 'risk-free' applications of military force (principally, air-strikes), he was 'deeply uncomfortable' about deploying US troops.[14] This discomfort saw Clinton adopt a consistently timid stance towards the crisis, a stance which – for all his efforts to remain in touch with public opinion – was often at odds with a domestic mood which appeared to be broadly *supportive* of US participation in multilateral troop operations inside Bosnia.[15]

As was the case with his predecessor, Clinton's use-of-force decision-making took place against a backdrop of competing domestic issues. Amongst the most notable of these was the considerable budget deficit he had inherited from the Bush administration. After the Republicans won both Houses in the November 1994 mid-term elections, executive-legislative budgetary wrangles became increasingly entwined in executive-legislative wrangles over America's Bosnia policy. Clinton's stumbling performance over Bosnia came to be viewed by a hostile Congress as the centre-piece of a broadly failing Clinton policy portfolio.[16]

Washington's Bosnia debates were greatly influenced by the international uncertainties and challenges prompted by the ending of the Cold War. Despite this array of new dynamics and rationales, however, it was one established issue – Vietnam – which came to dominate the agenda. As Samantha Power observes, throughout Washington's entire engagement with the crisis, 'The one-word bogey "Vietnam" became the ubiquitous shorthand for all that could go wrong…if the United States became militarily involved.'[17] However, if there was nothing

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[14] Power (2002), p. 274; Blumenthal (2003), p. 60; DiPrizio (2002), p. 119.
[15] Sobel (2001), p. 228.
[16] Halberstam (2001), pp. 215 & 297-299.
[17] Power (2002), p. 284.

exceptional in the fact that Vietnam dominated Washington's debates over the Bosnian War, the White House's 'relationship' with the Vietnam Syndrome during this period *was* exceptional since it manifested itself in a way which would have been unthinkable just a few years previously.

Whilst the previous two case studies showed that the White House has worked hard to publicly *reject* the appropriateness of the Vietnam analogy as it has sought to get Americans to support the *deployment* of US forces throughout the post-Vietnam years, this last case study demonstrates that the White House has sometimes had to work just as hard in its efforts to publicly justify the *withholding* of US troops from foreign conflicts. At such times, Presidents have appeared all too aware of what subject they should invoke in order to do this.

Conflict in Bosnia Herzegovina – an overview

Before 1991, Yugoslavia had been made up of six republics – Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Montenegro. With the break-up of the country as a consequence of the end of the Cold War, economic hardships and nationalist sentiments sparked demands for each region to seek independence from Belgrade. These demands, in turn, led to war. On 25th June 1991, Croatia and Slovenia declared independence from a fragmenting and disharmonious Yugoslav federation. Citing the need to protect ethnic Serbs living in those regions, the Serbian leader in Belgrade, Slobodan Milosevic, responded with near-immediate military action. He deployed the Serb-dominated Yugoslav National Army (JNA) in an effort to force these countries back into line. Slovenia, with very few ethnic Serbs living in

it, was the most geographically remote and culturally the most 'Western' of the former Yugoslav republics. It had also prepared itself militarily for hostilities against JNA forces. As a consequence of these various factors, the JNA withdrew from Slovenia after less than a fortnight, in what became known as the 'phoney war'.[18]

Croatia's secession was very different. Directly neighbouring Serbia, it had a sizeable Serb minority and a strategically desirable coastline. Reluctant to live as a minority under an independent Croat government in Zagreb, Croatian Serbs rallied to Milosevic's rallying cry for a 'Greater Serbia' and began an insurgency which was considerably bolstered by JNA regulars. They quickly seized around one-third of Croatia. The special envoy to the UN, former US Secretary of States Cyrus Vance, managed to broker a cease-fire between the two sides in November 1991. It was enforced by the deployment of a 12,000-strong UN peacekeeping force (UNPROFOR) into Serb-held parts of Croatia, in early 1992. Relative peace would prevail until late 1994. Renewed hostilities inside Croatia would ultimately leave around 10,000 dead and produce nearly three quarters of a million refugees.[19] However, Croatia's violence would pale into insignificance when compared to what would subsequently unfold inside Bosnia Herzegovina.

To Balkans watchers, the rise in militant Serb nationalism was particularly ominous for Bosnia. With a population of around 4 million, it was the most ethnically heterogonous of Yugoslavia's republics (Bosnian Muslims comprised roughly 45% of the population, Bosnian Serbs, 30%, and Bosnian Croats 17%) and there were many areas in which all three major ethnic groups lived in close proximity. There were concerns that if a Bosnian declaration of independence from Belgrade sparked a war – as it had in Slovenia and Croatia – then Bosnia's Muslims could find themselves

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[18] Chollet (2005), p. 3.
[19] DiPrizio (2002), pp. 104, 105 & 108; Chollet (2005), p. 3.

dangerously vulnerable. Whilst Bosnia's Serbs and Croats would have what Samantha Power has described as a 'parent protector in the neighbourhood' (namely, the surrounding Serbian Yugoslav and Croatian states themselves), Bosnia's Muslims had no such protection and they would have to look to the international community for assistance.[20] This imbalance in the provision available to Bosnia's three main ethnic groups would have shocking repercussions in the coming years.

Wary of a bloody secession, the Muslim-Croat majority government of Bosnia, centred in Sarajevo, sought Western assistance in organising its independence referendum. However, the two Bosnian Serbs who formed part of the government publicly urged their fellow Serbs to boycott any such event, before walking out of government in protest.[21] Despite the Serb protests, the independence referendum was held on 3rd March 1992. Whilst 99.4% voted *for* independence from Belgrade, there was only negligible Bosnian Serb participation. Formal recognition of Bosnia's independence by both the United States and the European Union then spurred hard-line Bosnian Serbs into action. The Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, declared the Serbs' right for a Serbian state with Sarajevo as its capital. Rallying Bosnian Serb paramilitaries which were supplemented by JNA regulars, the Bosnian Serb army quickly numbered around 80,000 troops. It then embarked upon a campaign aimed at establishing an ethnically homogenous Bosnian Serb state – the *Republika Srpska* – principally through 'ethnically cleansing' the country of its majority Muslim population.[22]

As had been feared, Bosnian Muslim forces found themselves considerably disadvantaged in the ensuing hostilities. In late 1991, in an effort to minimise violence, the UN had imposed a blanket arms embargo on all of the Yugoslav

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[20] Power (2002), pp. 247-248.
[21] DiPrizio (2002), p. 105.
[22] Power (2002), pp. 248-249; Di Prizio (2002), p. 112.

territories. However, since the Bosnian Serb forces had access to former JNA arsenals located inside Bosnia, they were able to considerably outgun their opponents. Consequently, Serb forces quickly mirrored their gains in Croatia, grabbing nearly 70% of Bosnia and laying siege to Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo.

The international community responded to these dramatic events. However, in a dismal precursor to what would become commonplace in the coming years, its response was woefully inadequate. On 5th June 1992, UNPROFOR's mission was expanded from Croatia into Bosnia. It was tasked with delivering humanitarian aid, protecting humanitarian supply routes, enforcing a 'no-fly zone' over Bosnia and establishing UN-guarded 'safe areas' for Bosnian Muslim civilians.[23] However, it quickly became clear that with its modest military presence and restricted mandate, UNPROFOR's relocation would do little to protect Bosnia's civilians and that much more had to be done. Precisely *what* should be done and – importantly – *who* should do it, became the most divisive question in international politics over the next three-and-a-half years.

Bosnia captures America's attention

Bosnia's unfolding conflict captured considerable attention in the United States.[24] Extensive Western media coverage of civilian massacres, shocking images of Serb-run concentration camps, and widespread reports of 'rape camps' outraged Americans and galvanised the perception that Bosnia's Serbs were the conflict's principal

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[23] Ibid, pp. 111-112 & 115.
[24] Power (2002), pp. 247 & 505.

belligerents.[25] Two broad coalitions of opinion emerged in Washington as to how the White House should respond. In a striking departure from the 'traditional' use-of-force delineations of the post-Vietnam years, liberals and hardliners joined voices to demand decisive American action to halt the Serbian onslaught: for some advocates, this entailed releasing Bosnian Muslim forces from the UN-imposed arms embargo, thus allowing them to more effectively engage the Bosnian Serbs; for others, the Serb atrocities against Bosnia's civilians demanded nothing less than decisive US military intervention into Bosnia.[26]

On the other side of this debate, a sizeable political and media cohort opposed virtually any form of American involvement with the conflict.[27] As had so often been the case in the post-Vietnam years, deployment-opponents quickly invoked the Vietnam experience in making the case for withholding US forces from Bosnia. And for all that he had triumphantly declared its death just over one year previously, it was President George H. W. Bush himself who brought the Vietnam Syndrome, centre-stage, into America's Bosnia debates.

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[25] John Simpson (1998), *Strange Places, Questionable People*, Macmillan Publishing, pp. 444-445; Eric V. Larson & Bogdan Savych (2005), *American Public Support for US Military Operations from Mogadishu to Baghdad*, RAND Corporation, p. 55. For a critique of the anti-Serb bias in the American media, and how it influenced America's approach to the war, see Danielle Sremac (1999), *War of Words. Washington Tackles the Yugoslav Conflict*, Praeger Publishing.

[26] Power (2002), p. 247; 'Debate Force on Bosnia. Now'. Editorial, *New York Times*, 13th April, 1993; David Rieff, 'Not Enough. Send Troops', *New York Times*, 29th April, 1993; Isaacs (1997), pp. 92-93; Western (2005), p. 222.

[27] Western (2005), pp. 133-174. See, for example, Elaine Sciolino, 'Christopher Explains Conditions For Use of US Force in Bosnia', *New York Times*, 28th April, 1993.

President Bush and Bosnia – the Vietnam Syndrome is back

Bush was President as Bosnia's hostilities came to prominence in the United States. However, whilst he had been quite willing to engage Iraqi forces after their invasion of Kuwait, he showed no such inclination towards the unfolding crisis in Bosnia. Now under considerable domestic pressure, his post-*Desert Storm* adulation had 'melted like snow in the spring'. Amidst domestic recession and with re-election at stake, he felt that his foreign policy priorities lay in normalising post-Cold War relations with Russia, *not* in risking his diminishing political capital on a remote civil war. Bush thus gladly deferred to European state leaders' early assertions that Bosnia was a 'European problem'.[28]

As Bosnia's hostilities escalated, however, Bush faced growing demands to assume leadership of a weak Western Bosnia policy.[29] Unmoved, he embarked upon a public diplomatic campaign aimed at convincing Americans that maintaining US military *disengagement* from Bosnia's war was the prudent option. Despite the fact that his presidency up until that point had been characterised by Reagan-esque efforts to convince Americans that the Vietnam Syndrome was behind them, Bush chose an established method of trying to dampen America's enthusiasm for military action. It was a method that domestic deployment-opponents had used against him as he had sought to rally support for his Persian Gulf deployment, just 18 months earlier: he publicly suggested that US military involvement in Bosnia might mire the United States in 'another Vietnam'.

In mid-June of 1992, as Congress pressured Bush to work with the UN in preparing a budget and a plan for possible military intervention into Bosnia, a White

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[28] Powell (1995) p. 559; Ambrose and Brinkley (1997), p. 377; DiPrizio (2002), pp. 117-119.
[29] Chollet (2005), p. 1; Power (2002), p. 306.

House spokesman told *The Washington Post* that Bosnia's war was 'two parts Lebanon and one part Vietnam'. Sarajevo airport was described as resembling 'Dien Bien Phu where Viet Minh artillery pounded the French from surrounding mountains in 1954'. 'What we are looking at here', another Bush official noted sagely, 'is a quagmire.'[30] These public statements represented a watershed moment in post-Vietnam executive branch foreign policy politicking; it was the first time that the White House had moved away from its consistent efforts to *dispel* mention of the Vietnam Syndrome and had actually 'used' it in debates over the deployment of US forces.

Despite this White House endorsement of the Vietnam analogy, however, the gravity of the events taking place inside Bosnia (and detailed media coverage of them) seemed to sustain broad domestic support for greater US involvement in Bosnia's war. On 6th August 1992, footage was released of two Serb-run concentration camps at Omarska and Trnopolje. The BBC World Affairs editor John Simpson recalls that:

> The pictures were quite unforgettable: barbed wire, skeletal figures. It could have been Dachau. The pictures went round the world, and ABC television ran them in full on their nightly news…they caused a sensation in the United States.[31]

They did indeed cause a sensation. Samantha Power notes that they 'concentrated grassroots and elite attention' and 'inflamed public outrage' like no post-war genocide.[32] Whilst many Americans continued to argue against *unilateral* US intervention into Bosnia, further reports of Bosnian Serb atrocities prompted three-

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[30] Barton Gellman, 'Defense Planners Making Case Against Intervention in Yugoslavia', *The Washington Post*, 13th June 1992. See also Western (2005), p. 150.
[31] Simpson (1998), pp. 444-445; Power (2002), p. 271.
[32] Power (2002), p.276.

fifths of polled Americans to support a multilateral military offensive (involving US troops) into Bosnia 'if the atrocities could not be prevented by any other means.'[33]

Although divided over how the United States should respond to the spiralling violence, Congress also responded with vigour. Within a week of the ABC broadcast, both Houses passed resolutions urging President Bush to draft a UN Security Council resolution to provide humanitarian relief to Bosnia's civilians – *through the use of force if necessary*.[34] However, Bush maintained his resolve. He admitted that whilst the concentration camps *did* perhaps invoke memories of the Nazi Holocaust, his prime concern was to make sure that the United States did not get 'bogged down in any way into some guerrilla warfare'. He added, in a clear allusion to Vietnam, 'We lived through that one.' As senior US statesmen, non-governmental organisations, and international religious leaders continued to demand a more forceful American commitment to Bosnia's beleaguered civilians, Bush continued to reject any escalation of US policy and he reminded Americans why *his* stance was the prudent one: 'I remember the Vietnam experience', he elucidated, 'Never get bogged down in a guerrilla war where you don't know what the hell you're doing.'[35]

By now, President Bush was aware that arms were being shipped secretly from Iran, via Croatia, to Bosnian Muslim forces, in clear contravention of embargo resolutions invoked by the United Nations.[36] Knowing that the Sarajevo government was now getting at least some assistance in its war effort may well have cemented

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[33] Polling information quoted in Richard Sobel, 'US and European Attitudes Towards Intervention in the Former Yugoslavia: Mourir Pour la Bosnie?' in Richard H. Ullman (ed.), (1996), *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations. Cited in Sobel (2001), p. 184.
[34] Richard F. Grimmett, 1st March, 2007, p. 33.
[35] Bush quoted in a news conference, 7th August 1992, cited in McEvoy-Levy (2001), p. 114. See also Power (2002), pp. 276-279; Henriksen (1996), p. 13; Michael Putzel, 'Treading Cautiously: Warnings of Military Folly', *The Boston Globe*, 7th August, 1992; Sandy Grady, 'Bush Wary of Balkan Snakepit Pressured By World Opinion, President Seeks Low-Risk Military Option For Defending Bosnia', *The Charlotte Observer*, 8th August, 1992; Donald A. Rothberg, 'Sending Troops Could Result in Quagmire, Experts Caution', *The Charlotte Observer*, 9th August, 1992.
[36] Richard Holbrooke (1999), pp. 50-51.

Bush's resolve to keep the United States at the sidelines of the crisis. Indeed, he maintained this position of disengagement throughout his final months in office, even though it appeared to be increasingly at odds with the national mood. In stark contrast to the scepticism Americans had demonstrated when asked to support the deployment of US forces to defend oil-rich Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in 1991, successive opinion polls suggested that well over 60% of Americans supported deploying US troops to assist Bosnia's beleaguered civilians. This public mood appeared to be evident in the corridors of government itself; in the State Department, 'widespread disdain' for Bush's Bosnia policy sparked a widely-publicised staff resignation and the consistent leaking of top-level policy deliberations and CIA reports on the crisis.[37]

Given that candidate Bill Clinton had advocated a tougher stance on Bosnia throughout the 1992 presidential election campaign, his November victory over Bush suggested the likelihood of a more muscular American Bosnia policy. At the very least, it was widely expected that he would move to formally lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian government. This was a broadly supported measure in the United States, given the popular assumption that it would 'even up the fight' between the poorly armed Bosnian forces and the Belgrade-backed Bosnian Serbs.[38] However, those who awaited these developments with a sense of anticipation were to be bitterly disappointed.

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[37] Sobel (2001), pp. 198 & 199. Throughout the crisis, Americans' opinions on Bosnia did seem to be more specific than merely supporting 'military intervention' – support was consistent (sometimes extremely high) for *multilateral* actions in inside Bosnia; support for *unilateral* US action was typically low. Americans also appeared to be more supportive of air-strikes than ground actions. Rarely throughout the conflict, however, did opinion-polling data reveal any constant, firmly entrenched public stance. Western (2005), pp. 164-165, 174 & 230.

[38] Kaufmann (2002), p. 143; Drew (1995), p. 17; McCrisken (2003), p. 169; Western (2005), pp. 170 & 174.

A new President – a new policy?

President Clinton walked into a war of words over Bosnia, one dominated by debates over the pros and cons of US military intervention, and concerns over the 'Vietnamness' of Bosnia and the wider Balkans region. However, this maelstrom of commentary was not confined to Washington. Indeed, it was not even confined to the United States. Whilst the embattled Bosnian government in Sarajevo had repeatedly implored greater American involvement in the crisis, the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic – well aware of the American public's focus upon the crisis – publicly warned the new President against escalating US involvement; American troops, he declared, would face 'another Vietnam' if they were sent to Bosnia.[39] The Serb Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj spoke in even starker terms. Any deployment of US forces, he cautioned, would see Bosnian Serb forces supplemented by 'tens of thousands of volunteers.' You 'would have to send thousands of body bags', he warned Clinton, 'It would be a new Vietnam.'[40]

The spectre of Vietnam initially appeared to have little effect upon the new President. At his first Bosnia meeting, he reiterated his commitment to Bosnia: 'If the United States doesn't act in situations like this', he asserted, 'nothing will happen.'[41] He subsequently declared his intention to step up efforts to establish peace in Bosnia and pledged that US forces *would* participate in enforcing that peace.[42] However, Clinton's thinking on how to achieve this was soon given pause by the now-standard Pentagon counsel on military intervention. After a few more Bosnia meetings, CJS General Colin Powell had painted such a daunting picture of what would be required

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[39] Simms (2002), p. 66; Christine Spolar & Julia Preston, 'Rivals Debate US Role in Balkans Crisis, Call for Support of UN Plan', *The Washington Post,* 5th February 1993.
[40] Power (2002), p. 284
[41] Drew (1995), p. 146.
[42] Grimmett, 1st March, 2007, p. 33.

to bring a military solution to the conflict that Clinton's election deployment-advocacy began to wilt. Clinton's was not the only intervention-bubble which was burst by those early meetings. His Secretary of State Warren Christopher now took the view that the American public would not stomach a military deployment on the scale that the military chiefs had outlined. Nor, he forecast, would they tolerate military casualties in a remote crisis which appeared to have little obvious relevance to the United States.[43]

It is interesting to note that this early conclusion, drawn by key administration figures, may have represented a major misjudgement of America's attitude towards Bosnia. The administration's Powell-inspired intervention-scepticism appeared to overlook the fact that President Bush had been roundly castigated for his apparent ignoring of Bosnia's beleaguered civilians, and that President Clinton himself had swept into office on a platform which, amongst other things, advocated a *more forceful* American Bosnia policy. Having won office, there was no suggestion whatsoever that the nation's mood had changed any – on the contrary, whilst Americans continued to show little willingness to see *unilateral* US intervention into Bosnia, polls over the next three months continued to suggest high public support for *multilateral* operations involving US troops inside Bosnia, either through the UN or NATO. Indeed by May, *PIPA* polls were suggesting nearly 80% support for such actions.[44] Clinton's acceptance of the Pentagon's gloomy forecast was thus a significant overlooking of the public mood and as he set more modest parameters for

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[43] Powell's projected estimations of the numbers of US troops which would be required were exaggerated. The previous chapters show that both of Clinton's predecessors had been faced by this Pentagon deployment-opposition as well, and that the military chiefs are not averse to exaggerating troop numbers in order to 'test' the President's commitment. See Henriksen (1996), p. 15 & Chollet (2005), pp. 13 & 18-20.

[44] *PIPA* poll (1994), cited in Sobel (2001), p. 187.

his engagement with the crisis, he paved the way for the first domestic criticisms of his foreign policy.

By February's end, Clinton had confined his Bosnia policy to having the US Air Force airdropping supplies to civilians in the region, and helping to enforce a UN-authorised 'no-fly zone' over Bosnia.[45] However, even these limited measures were constrained by the most timid of mission parameters – for example, when making airdrops, US pilots were ordered to fly at such high altitudes (in order to avoid any chance of being hit by anti-aircraft fire) that aid packages frequently missed their targets; indeed, they often fell into the hands of belligerents. Unsurprisingly, Clinton's 'diluted' Bosnia policy quickly came under fire. Castigating the President's 'disappointing showing so far', *The Washington Post* criticised a Bosnia policy 'on the cheap' and accused Clinton of giving the Bosnian Serbs 'a green light to conduct…unchecked and relatively cost-free ethnic cleansing.'[46] The *New York Times* attacked Clinton's willingness to 'bend his knee to the murderous thugs who lead Serbian aggression in Bosnia.'[47] In response, Clinton clarified his position on the crisis and announced that there were only *two* circumstances under which US troops would enter Bosnia: if the 12,000-strong UNPROFOR contingent needed assistance in extricating itself; or if a formal peace was agreed between the three warring sides. Unless either of these conditions arose, Clinton declared, there would be *no* US military presence on Bosnian soil.[48]

This was certainly an unambiguous clarification of the *future* policy pathways that Clinton's Bosnia policy *might* take but it did little to clarify just what form this policy would take in the meantime. Indeed, it simply fuelled Washington's debates

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[45] Ibid; Drew (1995), pp. 146-147.
[46] Stephen S. Rosenfield, 'Mercy Flights, Merciless Results', *The Washington Post* 5th March 1993.
[47] Anthony Lewis, 'On Bended Knee?' *New York Times*, 5th March 1993.
[48] Chollet (2005), p. 3; Henriksen (1996), p. 14; Holbrooke (1999), p. 39.

over America's obligation to Bosnia. Whilst the new limited policy continued to spur discontent and criticism from Bosnia hawks, the President's explicit declaration that there *were* scenarios in which US forces *would* be sent into Bosnia – coupled to persisting reports that elements within the administration were continuing to push for this outcome anyway – sustained the concerns of intervention-opponents. In *The Washington Post*, Richard Cohen attributed the growing criticism of the Clinton Bosnia policy to the lack of political debate the President had encouraged on the issue of possible military intervention. Bosnia was, Cohen argued, 'terribly complicated' and 'made all the more complicated by the memory of Vietnam'. Whilst strategic bombing would not be sufficient to curb the Serb onslaught inside Bosnia, he asserted, the deployment of US ground troops into the fray was not necessarily the answer either. 'Things sometimes just go wrong', Cohen concluded, 'That was the experience of Vietnam and no rule of nature says it cannot be repeated'.[49]

Thus, whilst Clinton's early deployment-advocacy had set Vietnam radars buzzing in Washington, it was clear that his climb-down from this position had done little to change things. With unrest mounting, Clinton's search for an effective Bosnia policy – one which would meet his election promise to do something about the crisis, and which would please both domestic opponents *and* proponents of US intervention in Bosnia – now began in earnest. It was an endeavour which soon faltered.

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[49] Richard Cohen, 'The Toughest Case of All', *The Washington Post*, 27th April 1993.

The arresting of the Clinton Bosnia policy: the Europeans reject 'lift-and-strike'

The military strategy Clinton finally settled upon for his Bosnia policy vividly reflected his new-found aversion to risky ground operations inside Bosnia. Termed 'lift-and-strike', the strategy was simple and – to the United States, at least – risk-free. It entailed, firstly, lifting the UN-imposed arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims (despite the fact that Clinton knew of the illicit arms trail between Iran and the Bosnian government in Sarajevo); secondly, it entailed punishing Serb transgressions through NATO air-strikes. On 1st May, 1993, Secretary of State Warren Christopher left for London, Paris, Moscow, Brussels, Bonn and Rome in order to solicit allied support for the strategy.[50]

Christopher's departure exposed what would become a characteristically fickle domestic attitude towards America's relationship with the Bosnian War. For all that Congress had been pressurising the White House to get tough on the Bosnian Serbs, the Secretary of State's departure – on a diplomatic mission tasked with persuading America's allies to do just that – sparked bipartisan legislative criticisms that the administration was now planning an aerial military offensive without consultation. Representative Bill Richardson (Dem. NM) denounced Christopher's mission, declaring (in yet another misreading of what current opinion polls appeared to suggest) that Americans did not support US air-strikes. He then accused Clinton of secrecy over his Bosnia policy:

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[50] Daalder (2000), p. 15.

> Given the fact that Bosnia could become a Vietnam quagmire if we are not careful, it is critically important that the Congress fully debate and authorize such an action. The President needs to bring in the American people on his decision.[51]

Republicans also invoked the Vietnam experience as they criticised the administration's latest actions. Representative Jim Ramstad (Rep. MN) cautioned that:

> Before we put one American pilot or troop in harm's way, the President must clearly define our national interest and mission. As General Colin Powell has told us, before we send troops into a dangerous situation, we must have a precise mission statement that defines how we get in, accomplish our goals, and get out. So far, we have not seen such a well-defined strategy from the President. We must not repeat the nightmare of Vietnam. As one who lost three friends in Vietnam, it is downright eerie to hear another President talk about bombing his enemies to the negotiating table.[52]

Reference to Vietnam was not confined to debates on Capitol Hill. Media commentary on the crisis continued to be similarly themed, perhaps most strikingly in *Time Magazine*, whose front cover featured pictures of President Clinton and President Lyndon Johnson, with the caption: 'Anguish over Bosnia. Will it be Clinton's Vietnam?' Clinton responded by acknowledging America's Vietnam concerns but also by reiterating his commitment to do something about Bosnia's spiralling civilian disaster:

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[51] Bill Richardson, 'Military Engagement in Bosnia', Remarks in House of Representatives, 6th May 1993. * NB – unless stated otherwise, all of the congressional debates and comments cited in this study can be found (by date/legislator's name & comments 'title') at Library of Congress' *Thomas* search facility: http://thomas.loc.gov/home/r104query.html

[52] Jim Ramstad, 'President Has Not Defined Bosnia Strategy', Remarks in House of Representatives, 11th May 1993.

> I'm trying to proceed in a very deliberate way to try to make sure there isn't a Vietnam problem here. But also to try to make sure that the United States keeps pushing to save lives and confine the conflict. I don't think we can just turn away from this. Just because we don't want to make the mistakes we did in Vietnam doesn't mean we shouldn't be doing anything.[53]

Secretary of State Christopher's failure to sell 'lift-and-strike' to the allies quickly arrested these debates. From the White House perspective, the refusal of France and Britain to accept the Clinton initiative was the crucial blow. Having shouldered the bulk of the transatlantic Bosnia policy between them – they had contributed the overwhelming majority of troops to UNPROFOR – Paris and London vehemently opposed any lifting of the arms embargo for the Bosnian government. Doing so, they argued, would flood Bosnia with more weapons and place French and British peacekeeping troops operating inside Bosnia under even greater threat.[54]

There were, however, other significant factors underlying the Anglo-French rejection of 'lift-and-strike'. As had been the case when George Bush was in the White House, Paris and London deeply resented the current American President's refusal to share the 'peacekeeping risk' and deploy US troops alongside European troops inside Bosnia. Unhappy with Clinton's efforts to dictate and lead a new transatlantic Bosnia policy which held risks only for his allies, Paris and London thus accompanied their rejection of 'lift-and-strike' with a stark warning to the White House; any move to unilaterally lift the arms embargo would see British and French troops withdrawn from UNPROFOR, effectively disbanding the UN's peacekeeping mission. This would leave President Clinton with no option but to make good on his

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[53] President Clinton, 'Interview with Don Imus of WFAN radio, New York City, May 12th 1993. Available at the US *Government Printing Office* archives (accessed 1st October 2008) at: http://frwebgate6.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/TEXTgate.cgi?WAISdocID=323798474536+16+1+0&WAISaction=retrieve
The *Time* cover is available to view at: http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19930517,00.html

[54] Daalder (2000), p. 17; Chollet (2005), pp. 3 & 7.

commitment to send US forces into Bosnia to oversee UNPROFOR's withdrawal. With UNPROFOR gone, the Americans might then even face the possibility of having to intervene militarily on behalf of the Bosnian government itself.[55] For President Clinton, this scenario was unthinkable and, taking the view that keeping US troops *out* of Bosnia could only be guaranteed by keeping UNPROFOR *in*, he decided to placate his two key allies; 'lift-and-strike' was shelved.[56]

Justifying inaction: Bosnia is like Vietnam

Back in the United States, Clinton's concession was criticised as yet another climb-down from his bold election pledges and a further betrayal of Bosnia's civilians. Newspaper editorials reminded the President that whilst few Americans supported *unilateral* US military action in Bosnia, high numbers continued to support the United States taking military action 'along with its allies in Europe'.[57] Under pressure, and with no apparent solution to the current transatlantic impasse over Bosnia policy, the Clinton White House now began copying its predecessor in an effort to justify its continuing inaction over the crisis – it started publicly emphasising the 'Vietnamness' of Bosnia.[58] With no clear pathway to follow, damage control now seemed to be the key imperative. As one Clinton aide memorably declared, the administration's mindset was: 'Bosnia is going to be a quagmire. Let's not make it our quagmire'. In

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[55] Ibid, pp. 1-9; Daalder (2000), pp. 18, 61-63. See also: Elaine Sciolino, 'Christopher Explains Conditions For Use of US Force in Bosnia'. *New York Times*, 28th April, 1993; Bruce B. Auster, 'Heading over there? Chances are growing that US troops will enter the Bosnia conflict'. *US News & World Report*, 19th December, 1994, pp. 40 & 42.
[56] Sobel (1998), pp. 264 & 265; Morris (1997), pp. 247-248.
[57] Richard Sobel (1998), 'Trends: United States Intervention in Bosnia', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 62, issue 2, (Summer 1998), pp. 264 & 265; Morris (1997), pp. 247-248.
[58] Henriksen (1996), p. 15; Press Briefing by George Stephanopoulos, 4th May 1993.

subsequent interviews, Secretary of State Christopher described Bosnia as 'a quagmire' and 'a morass'. 'If US troops are put in there', he warned, 'they'll be there for an indefinite period of time'.[59]

Despite these sentiments, however, and very much in keeping with the indecisiveness which would come to characterise his Bosnia policy, Clinton's deployment-aversions appeared to crumble as the siege of Sarajevo became the latest bleak event to focus international attention on Bosnia. Since the onset of hostilities, the Bosnian capital had been under near-constant bombardment from Serbian artillery batteries positioned on the mountains which surrounded the city. The shelling had killed nearly 10,000 people and, with aid supplies into the city greatly hindered, Sarajevo was now starving. Having been shocked when he watched a harrowing CNN report from the city, Clinton ordered his NSA Anthony Lake to re-examine *all* the options on Bosnia – including the introduction of US ground forces.[60]

At this point, there seemed every likelihood that this option would be broadly supported in the United States – *PIPA* polling indicated that 76% of Americans supported the introduction of US troops into Bosnia as part of a *multilateral* peacekeeping operation.[61] However, whilst the domestic climate appeared to remain permissive for Clinton to solicit allied support for a ground offensive into Bosnia, he backed away from this option yet again. Once more, it was the pessimistically lofty projections of the military chiefs – Vice-Chairman Admiral David Jeremiah contended that 70,000 troops would be required to relieve Sarajevo – which put pay to Clinton's timid deployment-advocacy. Having rejected the option of ground forces,

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[59] Warren Christopher, 'ABC News Nightline Interview with the Secretary of State Warren Christopher', 25th May 1993. Available at the Department of State's *US Policy in Bosnia* site: http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/bosnia/bostal2.html. See also Drew (1995), p. 155.
[60] Chollet (2005), p. 5; Daalder (2000), p. 19.
[61] *PIPA* poll (1994), cited in Sobel (2001), p. 187. In contrast to the generally strong support for US involvement in *multilateral* operations, support for *unilateral* US ground operations inside Bosnia was rarely high; indeed, it was typically low.

the President decided once more to try and persuade the Europeans to coalesce around the 'safe' option of using NATO airpower.[62] With the deteriorating situation in Sarajevo providing an emotional undercurrent of leverage to persuade his allies, Clinton articulated three key aims for his new strategy: firstly, to end the Serbs' strangulation of Bosnia's capital; secondly, to assist UNPROFOR troops in protecting six Bosnian Muslim 'safe areas' threatened by the Serbs; thirdly, using the threat of NATO power to try and force the Bosnian Serbs into negotiations.[63]

Clinton's plan required formal NATO agreement and it took a 'rancorous' sixteen-hour meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) on 2nd August, before the Americans managed to secure it. However, the conditions of agreement were extremely significant. Still resentful of Washington's deployment-aversions, France and Britain only gave their consent to the Clinton plan on the condition that NATO air-strikes were first agreed by both NATO *and* UNPROFOR command. Under this 'dual-key' arrangement, both bodies would have to formally give the go-ahead – 'turn their key' – before any air-strikes could proceed.[64] Facing yet another public embarrassment if he was seen to be unable to convince his NATO allies, Clinton had little option but to accept these stipulations. When announced, the agreement was publicly presented as a step forward; in reality, it was nothing of the sort and Clinton knew it. It ensured that a weak UN mission was now *further* compromised by a 'dual-key' arrangement which allowed Britain and France – who held influential roles in UNPROFOR command and who continued to resent the White House's deployment-aversions – to refuse any air-strikes they felt would threaten their troops inside Bosnia. It was, in sum, an arrangement which ensured the continuation of a

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[62] Herspring (2005), p. 357.
[63] Daalder (2000), pp. 19-21; Chollet (2005), p. 5.
[64] Author interview with General George Joulwan (USA, retired), Arlington, Virginia, 11th May 2006.

toothless UNPROFOR mission, one which, as Bosnia's atrocities escalated, threatened to fracture the transatlantic relationship.[65] Back in Washington, acrimony over America's involvement in Bosnia was to come much sooner.

Bloodshed in Mogadishu and humiliation in Port-au-Prince; Vietnam shadows darken over Washington

If the August NAC agreement closed the door on any imminent US troop deployment to Bosnia, events on another continent effectively slammed that door shut. On 3rd October 1993, 18 US soldiers participating in the UN mission in Somalia were killed in a major fire-fight on the streets of Mogadishu.[66] As Americans watched harrowing television pictures of a dead US soldier being dragged through the city in front of baying crowds, a stunned Congress turned its ire towards the White House. Legislators ordered the President to 'get his foreign policy right before Somalia becomes another Vietnam' whilst others demanded an end to American involvement in UN peacekeeping missions altogether. The Mogadishu battle had a significant impact upon both the Clinton administration and its foreign policy. It not only marked the end of American involvement in what political and media critics quickly started calling 'Vietmalia'; it also dismembered any significant consensus of domestic support for an offensive US ground intervention into Bosnia.[67]

Incredibly, given that Washington was ringing to the sound of buzzing Vietnam radars, Clinton found himself under pressure to take military action just days

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[65] Clinton (2004), p. 534; Daalder (2000), pp. 21-23; Chollet (2005), p. 5.
[66] Henriksen (1996), p. 11.
[67] Power (2002), p. 317; McCrisken (2003), pp. 167-168; Hendrickson (1998), p. 243.

later. Even as the political maelstrom was ensuing over Mogadishu, members of the Black Caucus in Congress had remained focussed upon the ongoing violence in Haiti and now demanded that President Clinton do something to address it. Having overthrown Haiti's first democratically elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in September 1991, the military junta of General Raoul Cedras was continuing to terrorise Aristide followers, despite the fact that delegations representing both sides had signed up to a UN-brokered agreement aimed at restoring Aristide to power. With thousands of Haitian refugees fleeing towards the Florida coast (and making headline news in the United States), Clinton responded to these congressional demands, despite the fact that the smoke from Washington's Somalia debates had hardly cleared.

On 11th October, he deployed the USS *Harlan County* to Haiti, as the vanguard of the international effort to reinstate the country's democratic government.[68] However, the ship arrived in Port-au-Prince to find the harbour lined with Cedras supporters, many armed and shouting – in an ominous allusion to the events of recent days – 'Somalia! Somalia!'[69] With a confrontation-free debarkation clearly out of the question, the *Harlan County* waited offshore all day as the Clinton administration discussed a Plan B. There wasn't one. So soon after Mogadishu, George Stephanopoulos recalls, 'no-one had the stomach for another fight' and the ship was eventually ordered to leave.[70]

The incident was a major international embarrassment for the United States and it inflamed criticisms of Clinton's foreign policy. Publicly, Clinton accepted the blame. Privately, however, he was irate; he lambasted his 'screwed-up foreign policy

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[68] DiPrizio (2002), pp. 86-92; Dobson & Marsh (2006), pp. 189-190.
[69] Halberstam (2001), p. 271; Herspring (2005), pp. 352-353.
[70] Ibid; George Stephanopoulos (1999), *All Too Human. A Political Education*, Little Brown & Company, New York, p. 217.

team' and complained that President Reagan had been far better served by his people over the crises in Lebanon and Grenada.[71] In the following days, he reprimanded his National Security Advisor Anthony Lake over the *Harlan County* incident. He also continued brooding over the decision of his Defence Secretary, Les Aspin, to refuse the military's request for more tanks in Somalia, shortly before the Mogadishu debacle. With the backlash from that fateful clash still raging, Clinton dwelt on the question many were now asking: would providing the military the protection they had asked for in September have averted the carnage in Mogadishu the following month? Clinton replaced Aspin in January.[72]

Clinton was now really feeling the strains of the foreign policy front. He was politically vulnerable, frustrated and also physically exhausted. He found no respite. The Mogadishu setback continued to haunt him and the event had served to increase the intensity of Washington's ongoing debates over US involvement in Bosnia.[73] Whilst deployment-opposition had hardened in some quarters, 'liberal critics' in the media continued demanding that US troops be sent to the Balkans, demands which pushed Clinton's notorious temper to breaking point. Stephanopoulos recalls that the President would sometimes explode in exasperation: 'What would they have me do? What the fuck would they have me do?'[74] As Bosnia's convolutions continued, increasing the pressure still further, Clinton would find few satisfactory answers to that question.

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[71] Ibid, p. 217; Halberstam (2001), pp. 272-273.
[72] Herspring (2005), pp. 348-349 & 353; Stephanopoulos (1999), p. 218. Two days before the Mogadishu fire-fight, CJS Colin Powell had privately suggested to Clinton that he replace Aspin. The replacement was announced on 24th January 1994. See Drew (1994), pp. 356-373.
[73] Clinton (2004), p. 552.
[74] Stephanopoulos (1999), p. 215; Henriksen (1996), pp. 12-13; Record (2002), pp. 115-116.

A frustrated retreat from 'assertive multilateralism'

Clinton's increasing disillusionment with America's international entanglements was vividly reflected in Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25. Released on 25th May 1994, this foreign policy directive articulated 'a comprehensive policy framework suited to the realities of the post-Cold War period'.[75] Perhaps its most significant aspect was its climb-down from the administration's early commitment to 'assertive multilateralism', something which Mogadishu – and ongoing Bosnia frustrations – had prompted.[76] PDD-25 also declared a greater foreign policy role for Congress. However, Clinton's Bosnia policy – such as it was – had thus far demonstrated little concern for legislative involvement and would very much continue in this vein, despite PDD-25's commitment to the contrary. Indeed, just over a month after PDD-25's release, Clinton positioned yet another decision-making 'layer' between Capitol Hill and America's Bosnia policy, when he organised a five-country 'Contact Group' (with Germany, France, Britain and Russia) tasked with better co-ordinating international strategy on Bosnia.[77] Still smarting from Somalia, congressional Republicans now expressed anger that a 'baggage-laden' UN and other national governments were having a greater say in America's Bosnia policy than the American legislature itself. As the 'Republican Revolution' saw the GOP win both Houses in the November 1994 mid-term elections, a spirited 104th Congress steeled itself to address this issue.[78]

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[75] DiPrizio (2002), p. 173.
[76] Sewall in Patrick & Forman (2002), pp. 196-198; Hendrickson (1998), p. 247.
[77] Chollet (2005), p. 6.
[78] Kenneth T Walsh, 'A Polarising President', *US News & World Report*, 7th November 1994, pp. 41 & 43; Miroff, Seidelman, & Swanstrom (2003), *Debating Democracy: A Reader in American Politics*, Houghton Mifflin, 4th edition, p. 256.

A legislative renaissance?

The 104th Congress convened with Republicans eager to start enacting their much-touted ten-point policy platform, the *Contract With America*. The *National Security Revitalization Bill* (NSRB) was introduced in January of 1995, stipulating, amongst other things, that White House-UN peacekeeping decisions should have prior congressional approval, that US forces operating in UN operations should be under US command, and that Congress should be notified 15 days prior to any UN Security Council vote on requests for additional peacekeeping funds. The bill passed on the House floor (241-181) with near-unanimous Republican support.[79] The Senate also acted. Senator Bob Dole (Rep. KS) introduced a *Peace Powers Act* which sought to expand presidential latitude in defending US interests whilst, at the same time, placing formal limitations upon the President's ability to deploy US troops in UN operations. Dole summed up the prevailing Republican mood with one succinct declaration 'We need to rein in the blank check on UN peacekeeping.'[80]

However, Clinton was not to be out-manoeuvred and he promptly exerted his authority as Commander-in-Chief. Given that the cornerstone of his Bosnia policy was to keep UNPROFOR *inside* Bosnia in order to keep US forces *out*, he resisted efforts to wrest America's Bosnia policy away from the current UN pathway. In an apparent overlooking of the sentiments expressed in PDD-25, the President warned senior Republicans that the NSRB violated his constitutional authority *and* that *mandatory* legislative consultation would limit his ability to 'protect US interests

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[79] Hendrickson (1998), p. 243.
[80] Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 'The Peace Powers Act (S.5) and the National Security Revitalization Act (H.R. 7)', 21st March 1995, cited in Hendrickson (1998), p. 246.

abroad'. Clinton made it clear that he would veto both bills if necessary.[81] Doubting that a clear two-thirds majority existed in the Senate which could successfully override the promised presidential veto, Senate Republicans backed down and ultimately never pursued the NSRB proposals.[82]

Clinton thus ably withstood the first salvos of the Republican Revolution, even though the Bosnia policy he was now guarding so covetously was an undisguised failure.[83] After the Bosnian Serbs stepped up their assault on the UN 'safe area' of Bihac, Clinton pushed to defend the town with NATO air-strikes. However, having initially consented, Paris and London soon halted the strikes, fearful of Serb retaliations against their troops on the ground. Eager not to jeopardise the allies' commitment to UNPROFOR, Clinton conceded. It was a decision which effectively abandoned Bihac to its fate.[84] Bosnian government forces ultimately held onto Bihac without NATO, but this episode made it crystal clear that the West's willingness to take risks in Bosnia was now wafer-thin. Angry and humiliated at the transparency of their own failings, some European officials openly declared that transatlantic efforts to end Bosnia's war were at a 'total dead end' and they vented their anger at Washington for continuing to withhold US troops from Bosnia. The French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé openly criticised the Clinton administration, telling his National Assembly that they want to 'give us lessons when they have not lifted one little finger to put even one man on the ground.'[85]

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[81] Kenneth T Walsh, 'A Polarising President'. *US News & World Report*, 7th November 1994, pp. 41.
[82] Hendrickson (1998), pp. 247.
[83] McCrisken (2003), p. 170.
[84] Chollet (2005), pp. 5-7.
[85] Author interview with General George Joulwan (USA, retired), Arlington, Virginia, 11th May 2006. See also, Bruce Auster, 'Heading over there? Chances are growing that US troops will enter the Bosnia conflict', *US News & World Report*, 19th December, 1994.

The deployment of US troops remained the locus of debate back in Washington as well. A Republican-dominated Capitol Hill continued to push for a lifting of the arms embargo as the most prudent (and risk-free) option for America's Bosnia policy and vehemently rejected any possibility of US troops joining a feeble UN mission. However, other sections of the America public-political arena continued to argue *for* a more forceful US engagement with the crisis and as domestic media coverage of Bosnia's atrocities continued unabated, Clinton complained to aides that the American media were trying to force him to get involved in Bosnia's war.

Washington's intervention-nonintervention debates were also fed by competing perspectives from within the US military itself. Whilst some senior military figures now advocated intervention as the only realistic way of ending the conflict – the Supreme Allied Commander of US Forces in Europe (SACEUR) himself, General George Joulwan, was adamant that 'the US must put troops on the ground'; a policy of bombing alone, he advised, 'would not work' – deployment-aversions on Capitol Hill continued to be nourished by three and four-star Generals whose congressional testimonies preached a very different story: that 'the Germans lost two or three divisions in the Balkans' during the Second World War, and that 'body-bags would be coming home by the thousands' should US troops be deployed.[86] The issue of casualties and exit strategies was continuing to dominate the agenda. 'The Vietnamese may be in terrible shape', Meg Greenfield of the *Washington Post* noted sardonically of Washington's Bosnia debates, 'but they have certainly got their revenge'.[87]

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[86] Author interview with General George Joulwan (USA, retired), Arlington, Virginia, 11th May 2006. See also, Morris (1997), p. 245.
[87] Greenfield cited in Isaacs (1997), p. 95. No source cited.

The death-throes of UNPROFOR: US troops to go into Bosnia at last?

As the transatlantic debates raged, the Bosnian Serb onslaught continued apace. Through 1995, they continued to dominate huge swathes of Bosnia. The conflict had now killed around 200,000 people and displaced 3 million others.[88] A frustrated President Clinton continued to badger his foreign policy team for new policy alternatives – 'I never get other options; I never get other information', he complained – and his administration continued stimulating Vietnam sensitivities in its efforts to justify the withholding of US troops and a near-catatonic transatlantic Bosnia policy.[89] On 9th March, Defence Secretary William Perry (who had replaced Les Aspin in January 1994) warned Americans that 'Bosnia is wooded, mountainous and often blanketed by clouds'. He then went onto detail why 'sending American troops for ground combat in Bosnia is a nonstarter'. During the course of what was a relatively short speech, Perry explicitly mentioned the incurring of US casualties on *ten* separate occasions, frequently allying these references to emotive phrases, such as the 'spilling of American blood'.[90] In subsequent speeches during this period, Perry confirmed that US casualties 'would be massive' if American forces entered Bosnia.[91] CJS General John Shalikashvili also emphasised the probability of US casualties, reminding Americans that 'A number of our European partners have had soldiers killed [in Bosnia]…we should not overlook the significance of that.'[92]

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[88] Henriksen (1996), p. 16.
[89] Morris (1997), p. 246.
[90] William J. Perry, 'US Choices in Bosnia'; Prepared remarks for The 100th Landon Lecture Series, Kansas State University, 9th March, 1995. * NB – Defence officials' speeches during 1995 can be found (by date) at the Secretary of Defence Speech Archive page on the US Department of Defence website: http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/SecDefArchive.aspx
[91] William J. Perry, 'The Ethical Use of Military Force'; Remarks delivered at The Forrestal Lecture, Foreign Affairs Conference, US Naval Academy, Annapolis, 18th April, 1995.
[92] General John Shalikashvili, 'Prepared Remarks…to the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, George Washington University, Washington', 4th May 1995.

However, even as the administration continued trying to persuade Americans *against* the wisdom of US military intervention into Bosnia, the passage of the conflict was actually making that outcome more likely. After the Bosnian Serbs renewed their shelling of Sarajevo, NATO conducted retaliatory air-strikes against them, only for the Serbs to respond by taking over 350 UNPROFOR troops hostage. This act achieved precisely what the Bosnian Serb leadership had hoped for – fearful of exacerbating the situation and placing their troops in even greater danger, the European leaders now refused to turn their 'keys' for further air-strikes. Some talked of withdrawing their troops altogether.[93]

With air-strikes now seemingly ruled out as a policy option, and with UNPROFOR now apparently hamstrung, the transatlantic Bosnia policy appeared to be stumbling towards one inevitable outcome: Op-Plan 4014, the NATO operations plan for overseeing the withdrawal of UNPROFOR troops from Bosnia. Described by one senior US military figure as a 'major war plan', Op-Plan 4014 required the United States to provide helicopters and up to 25,000 of the 60,000 NATO troops tasked with evacuating UN peacekeepers from designated landing-zones inside Bosnia, possibly under Bosnian Serb fire.[94]

From the Oval Office, this turn of events looked disastrous. If the Europeans really *did* decide to disband UNPROFOR, Clinton knew that he had no choice but to make good on his commitment and send US troops into a conflict-zone which was too dangerous even for an international peacekeeping force. He pondered darkly the political damage that this turn of events might do him. Not only was his administration keenly aware that 'little public relations groundwork had been laid' for such an operation but the financial cost of OP-Plan 4014 – $700 million to the United

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[93] Chollet (2005), p. 8; Daalder (2000), pp. 154-155.
[94] Halberstam (2001), p. 306; Chollet (2005), pp. 9 & 12.

States alone – virtually guaranteed confrontation with the Republican-dominated Congress.[95] In short, UNPROFOR's imminent withdrawal loomed large as a political – and perhaps a military – disaster for Clinton. He needed a new policy – and fast.

Agonising over the options

As the Clinton administration brainstormed how to keep UNPROFOR inside Bosnia, the recently elected French President Jacques Chirac now offered a bold new strategy for doing just that. Incensed after seeing pictures of French troops tied to Bosnian Serb artillery pieces, Chirac telephoned Clinton on 27th May, suggesting the deployment of a heavily-armed Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) tasked with protecting UNPROFOR troops inside Bosnia.[96] Clinton supported the plan, in no small part because it required Washington to provide various logistical and intelligence support but *not* troops. The RRF, consisting 10,000 French, British and Dutch troops, was operational by early July.[97]

Despite this apparent step forward in the transatlantic Bosnia policy, the situation inside Bosnia continued to deteriorate and the Clinton administration continued to struggle with domestic discord over the crisis. In the aftermath of the RRF agreement, the administration met to decide how they might further shore up the allies' commitment to UNPROFOR so that Op-Plan 4014 could be avoided once and for all. It was agreed that the administration would announce that – *should the need arise* – it would deploy US troops to Bosnia to help relocate UN peacekeepers to more defensible positions. However, whilst the administration viewed this

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[95] Daalder (2000), p. 48-49.
[96] Ibid., pp. 8, 11 & 12; Halberstam (2001), p. 303.
[97] Daalder (2000), pp. 44-45.

deployment as a commitment which would *only* be enacted in a worse-case-scenario, Clinton's announcement of the administration's new position – he declared that the administration would 'assist' NATO in reconfiguring or strengthening UNPROFOR troops inside Bosnia, stressing that this would only be a '*temporary* use of our ground forces' (emphasis added) – prompted 'uproar' on Capitol Hill and wild media speculation over what was behind this apparently seismic policy shift. Then, even as this latest domestic uproar over Bosnia unfolded, an American F-16 pilot was shot down over Bosnia by a Bosnian Serb missile. The incident allowed political and media critics to make comparisons between the plight of the pilot and that of American Prisoners of War (POWs) in Vietnam, a subject which has remained one of the most poignant and enduring associations with the Vietnam War for many Americans. Then, with Vietnam radars in Washington sensitised once more, the capital's 'raucous frenzy' over Bosnia increased still further.[98]

Having attended a Defence Ministers' meeting in Paris on 3rd June, Defence Secretary William Perry returned to Washington and briefed senior legislators that the recently agreed RRF would be under the command of each contributing nation. This information was in fact wrong. Incredibly, Perry had left the Paris meeting early and he was unaware of a tardy agreement that the RRF should be under general UNPROFOR command. Aside from the fact that the Defence Secretary had returned to Washington with entirely the wrong information, the late decision to tie the RRF to UNPROFOR also had significant financial implications; it meant that the US was obligated to pay 31.7% of its $300 million cost. On discovering this, an incredulous Congress refused to sanction the funds, forcing Clinton – undeterred by what he

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[98] Chollet (2005), pp. 13-14; Stephanopoulos (1999), p. 355; Author interview with former State Department official, Dr William Schneider Jr. Washington DC 10th May, 2006.

dismissed as partisan fiscal obstinacy – to blatantly circumvent legislators and draw $50 million for the RRF operation from the existing Defence Department budget.[99]

Clinton may have been flexing his muscles as Commander-in-Chief but both he *and* his Bosnia policy were now coming under heavy criticism from legislators and the media alike. He quickly moved to quell what some of his administration officials were describing as a 'national storm'.[100] Clinton publicly reiterated that US troops would be deployed to Bosnia *only* if there were 'a genuine peace' in Bosnia or if UNPROFOR troops were 'stranded'. The latter scenario, he stressed, was 'highly unlikely'.[101] Defence Secretary Perry also made a public statement aimed at demonstrating to Americans that the White House was well aware of the folly of sending US troops in Bosnia's war. He returned to a familiar theme in delivering this message – to enter the war, he declared, would entail 'the commitment of several hundred thousand troops, a long war and thousands of casualties'. 'If you follow these proposals to their natural conclusion', he asserted, 'they lead down a slippery slope to the same unintended consequence…the drawing in of American combat troops.'[102]

By this stage, feeling as if they were merely lurching from one crisis to the next on Bosnia, many administration figures were now convinced that it was Washington's 'key allies', France and Britain, who were the major obstacle to progress on the crisis. This feeling was apparent when, in mid-June, NSA Anthony Lake circulated a new plan for US policy on Bosnia. Lake's plan was bold in the extreme – although it could not possibly be admitted in public, it actually *allowed* UNPROFOR to fail so that it would be withdrawn from Bosnia. With UNPROFOR

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[99] Daalder (2000), pp. 50-51 &54.
[100] Stephanopoulos (1999), p. 355.
[101] Clinton cited in Morris (1997), pp. 253-254.
[102] William J. Perry, 'US Policy on Bosnia Remains Constant'; Prepared statement, 7th June 1995.

now out of the picture, Lake reasoned that the United States would then be able to dictate policy, absent the hindrance of Anglo-French protestations. With no French or British peacekeeping troops on the ground to worry about, he surmised that the administration would effectively have *carte blanche* to organise and conduct the massive NATO air offensive that President Clinton had long advocated.

Lake's plan was positively received by many Clinton officials but it was clearly an extremely risky strategy. It seemed strong on practical simplicity vis-à-vis the *current* situation but President Clinton knew that it would be a public relations disaster, one which might also have serious implications for the future of NATO. Lake's strategy may have willingly let the feeble UN mission fail but there was little doubt that the North Atlantic alliance would also be implicated in this failure since it was, after all, NATO's key members who had failed to implement a decisive military strategy for stopping the Bosnian Serb army. With questions still being asked about the viability of a post-Cold War NATO, and knowing that any UNPROFOR withdrawal required a substantial US military commitment, Clinton decided to persevere with UNPROFOR, despite the criticism that its failures were continuing to heap upon him.[103]

The continuing policy stalemate reinvigorated Clinton's disgruntlement with his foreign policy team. It also stirred tensions within the team itself.[104] Christopher and Perry complained to Clinton over Anthony Lake's secrecy, arguing that it was the NSA's guardedness over policy which was causing so much of the administration's disjointedness. Lake denied these accusations. Clinton himself also received complaints from the State Department when neither they nor representatives of the US mission to the UN were invited to a White House 'defence meeting' about OP-Plan

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[103] Halberstam (2001), p. 312.
[104] Stephanopoulos (1999), p. 355.

4014 and the RRF.[105] As the administration's Bosnia meetings increasingly turned into frustrated arguments over goals and strategy, one of Clinton's most influential advisors, Dick Morris – a man reviled by most of Clinton's foreign policy team – started covertly soliciting 'expert' opinion from outside the government on the viability of a unilateral American bombing campaign against Serbia itself. With frustration and desperation exerting an increasingly firm grip on a disjointed Clinton team, events in Bosnia were soon to force the President's hand.[106]

Pushed over the abyss

On 6th July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces overran the UN-guarded 'safe area' of Srebrenica. Over the next week or so, they massacred around 8,000 Muslim men and boys who had sought refuge there. It was Europe's biggest single massacre since the Second World War.[107] Amidst the international outrage, French President Jacques Chirac lambasted the 'congenital impotence' of the UN before turning his ire towards Clinton's continued dithering over the crisis: 'there is no leader of the Atlantic alliance', he carped; the 'position of the leader of the free world is vacant.' Adamant that the West now had to use decisive military force against the Serbs, Chirac implored Clinton to re-take Srebrenica by force and pushed to protect Bosnia's remaining 'safe areas', starting by fast-tracking 1,000 RRF troops to Gorazde, the next town the Serbs would likely target.[108]

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[105] Daalder (2000), p. 54.
[106] Morris (1997), pp. 253-254; Stephanopoulos (1999), pp. 381-382.
[107] Sudetic (1998), pp. 253-315; Daalder (2000), p.67; Halberstam (2001), pp. 314-315; Chollet (2000), p. 24.
[108] Fred Coleman, 'A Gaullist bulldozer gets down to work in Paris', *US News & World Report*, 31st July, 1995, p. 33; Daalder (2000), pp. 70-73, 80 & 93; 'The Week in Review', *Balkan Watch*, 17th July

On Capitol Hill, patience had also worn thin with a seemingly rudderless Clinton Bosnia policy. Hearing the White House continue to declare that it did not want to risk 'Americanizing the war' and putting US troops 'significantly at risk', both Democrat and Republican legislators decided that enough was enough.[109] Arguing that if the West would not defend them, the Bosnian government should at least be allowed to defend itself, the Senate Republican leader Robert Dole and Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman now pushed to sweep aside Clinton's prolonged refusal to formally end the UN arms embargo against the Sarajevo government. The Dole-Lieberman bill looked likely to have sufficient bipartisan support to over-ride Clinton's promised veto and the Senate voted to lift the arms embargo on 26th July; the House did so six days later.[110] This was the very last thing that Clinton needed; if Congress was to vote to lift the embargo, France and Britain would likely make good on their UNPROFOR evacuation threats and that meant US troops going into Bosnia.

President Clinton felt squeezed by the post-Srebrenica backlash. He privately supported lifting the arms embargo (indeed, he and his 'inner-circle' had willingly maintained the White House's 'don't ask, don't tell' stance, vis-à-vis the secret Iranian arms shipments) but he remained adamantly opposed to *anything* which might prompt the need for a US-led UNPROFOR withdrawal operation.[111] Clinton also resented that it was the bullish President Chirac – now being referred to as the 'Gaullist bulldozer' in some sections of the American media – who was now widely

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1995. The Balkan Institute. Accessed 8th July 2008 at: http://www.publicinternationallaw.org/programs/balkans/archives/1995/BW227.DOC;.

[109] Mike McCurry 'Press Briefing'. 13th July, 1995. Available at: http://clinton6.nara.gov/1995/07/1995-07-13-press-briefing-by-mike-mccurry.html

* NB – henceforth, unless cited otherwise, all presidential administration communications can be found (by date and comment 'title') in the 'public papers' sections of the Clinton presidential library: http://clinton6.nara.gov/index.html

[110] Chollet (2005), p. 37; 'The Week in Review', *Balkan Watch*, 14th August, 1995, The Balkan Institute. Accessed 8th July 2008 at: http://www.publicinternationallaw.org/programs/balkans/archives/1995/BW231.DOC

[111] Holbrooke (1999), pp. 50-52.

seen to be leading the transatlantic response to Srebrenica.[112] Clinton complained that he was 'getting creamed' over Bosnia and he badgered his foreign policy team for options: 'Why aren't my people doing more for me? Why can't I have a new policy?' Clinton also vented his frustrations at the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali who, Clinton argued, was 'too weak' and 'won't stand up and take action' on Bosnia.[113]

For all his castigations, however, Clinton seemed blind to the role that *his own* weaknesses and indecisions were continuing to play in precluding decisive action over Bosnia. Since late 1994, US military commanders had been 'panic planning' in their uncertainty over what mission – UNPROFOR withdrawal, UNPROFOR reinforcement or a continuation of the current policy meander – the administration favoured and for all his resentment at Chirac's post-Srebrenica status, Clinton's thoughts on how to deal with the Bosnian Serb onslaught were positively timid when compared to those of his charismatic French counterpart.[114] Bill Morris's memoirs are telling; he recalls that in White House Bosnia meetings throughout this period, Clinton continued using the word *can't* as he rhymed off a litany of reasons as to why he could not push through his preferred strategies on the crisis. At one such meeting, Morris challenged the President: 'what do you mean *can't*? You're commander-in-chief; where does *can't* come from?'[115]

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[112] See for example, Fred Coleman, 'A Gaullist bulldozer gets down to work in Paris', *US News & World Report*, 31st July, 1995.
[113] Clinton cited in Halberstam (2001), pp. 312 & 316-317 and Chollet (2005), p. 26.
[114] Author interview with General George Joulwan (USA, retired), Arlington, Virginia, 11th May 2006. Also, Halberstam (2001), pp. 305-306.
[115] Morris (1997), pp. 254-255.

Inching towards an endgame strategy

It was not just President Chirac's post-Srebrenica international standing which fed President Clinton's discomfort. Chirac's bold plan for protecting Bosnia's remaining 'safe areas' placed Clinton under considerable pressure. The French premier's insistence that Gorazde be militarily reinforced by RRF troops – those troops transported and supported by US helicopters – publicly threw down the gauntlet to Clinton, who knew that an American refusal would give the impression of White House indifference in the face of the Srebrenica massacre.

Despite the considerable imperative to act, however, Clinton officials were extremely sceptical about the French plan. They were especially concerned that it would put American helicopters at the vanguard of the challenge to the Bosnian Serb offensive. Furthermore, despite its designation as a 'beefed-up' military force, Clinton officials harboured doubts over the efficacy of the RRF once it was in theatre. It would, after all, still be operating within the existing weak UN framework. Unhappy at these prospects, President Clinton continued to focus upon a massive NATO air campaign as the most viable way of ending the Bosnian Serbs' stranglehold. After a series of meetings to discuss the Goradze reinforcement plan, his administration agreed that since the French plan was dependent upon the use of NATO airpower to disable Bosnian Serb positions which might threaten both the RRF troops and their transportation into theatre, it surely made more sense simply to use airpower in the first instance – in other words, to use NATO warplanes to actively *head off* Serb aggression rather than to employ them only once that aggression appeared to be underway.

Convinced that this was the surest (and most risk-free) strategy, the administration now stepped up the pressure on its key European partners to support it. Clinton officials embarked upon a series of diplomatic initiatives aimed at convincing the allies to support a policy which would see any Serb moves to threaten Gorazde trigger NATO retaliation – significantly, however, Clinton officials made it clear that this retaliation would not just be 'pinprick' air-strikes against the *transgressing Serb units*, as before; instead, the new Clinton plan proposed that NATO's retaliation would comprise a prolonged and massive NATO air offensive *against Bosnian Serb positions and forces throughout Bosnia*. Significantly, Clinton's new strategy was also predicated upon streamlining the 'dual-key' mechanism for sanctioning air-strikes by withholding the 'key' held by the UN civilian command – the White House viewed UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali as a considerable impediment to air-strikes and wanted him removed from the chain of command.[116]

The American proposals were hotly debated two weeks after the Srebrenica massacre, at a conference called in London by the British Prime Minister, John Major. After a day of 'American arm-twisting', the British and French agreed in principle to the two key elements of the Clinton proposal: to commit to protecting Gorazde and extending what became known as the 'Gorazde rules' to Bosnia's other remaining 'safe areas' (Tuzla, Bihac and Sarajevo); and to streamline air-strike decision-making by removing UN civilian authorities from the 'dual-key' decision-making process.[117]

Despite the fact that agreement appeared to have been reached, however, Clinton's push to have Boutros-Ghali cede his decision-making 'key' quickly created problems. Whilst Clinton officials came away from the London conference with the impression that this issue had been settled and agreed upon – they had stipulated that,

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[116] Daalder (2000), pp. 70-73 & 80; Chollet (2005), p. 33.
[117] Chollet (2005), pp. 29-32 & 34.

under certain conditions, the UN 'key' should be turned on automatically, with no need for approval from the UN civilian authorities – Boutros-Ghali (who had attended the meeting) subsequently insisted that he would *not* give up his 'key' since it violated the UN Security Council resolutions. In the face of Boutros-Ghali's resistance, the French and British then also appeared to backtrack from the tenets agreed in London. They now took the Secretary General's side, asserting that UN civilian authorisation *should* be necessary to any decision-making which might effectively spark a full-scale air war against the Bosnian Serbs. The threat that such a war would pose to their troops on the ground had, of course, been the principal Anglo-French concern since the beginning of UNPROFOR's involvement in Bosnia. [118]

It took a difficult thirteen-hour meeting of the North Atlantic Council, on 25th July, to iron out these issues. Over the course of the meeting, the NAC agreed that NATO airpower *should* be used to protect Gorazde and the other 'safe areas' from the Bosnian Serbs (it was agreed that force should be used even if was only *suspected* that Bosnian Serb forces were about to mount an assault on these areas) and – most importantly – that the UN civilians *would* relinquish their decision-making 'key'. Anglo-French concerns over the vulnerability of their troops to Bosnian Serb retaliations – this issue had been the basis of their support for Boutros-Ghali's resistance to altering the existing 'dual-key' mechanism – were now fast diminishing since UNPROFOR troops were now being withdrawn from Bosnia's most vulnerable areas.

This galvanising of transatlantic agreement subsequently persuaded Secretary General Boutros-Ghali to submit (albeit under considerable American diplomatic pressure) to the demand to relinquish his 'key' to the authority of the French General

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[118] Chollet (2005), pp. 31-32.

Bernard Janvier, the overall commander of UNPROFOR inside Bosnia. Henceforth, as President Clinton wished, it would be the UN's military commander on the ground and *not* the UN civilians who would okay NATO air-strikes.[119]

New purpose

Whilst the post-Srebrenica meetings had slowly moved the allies towards agreement over how to deal with the Bosnian Serbs, it was events in Bosnia itself which – once again – pushed the transatlantic Bosnia policy forward. In early August, Croatian forces decisively defeated the Bosnian Serbs in north-eastern Croatia, pushing them back into Bosnia itself.[120] Clinton had personally been 'rooting for the Croatians', admitting – in a telling admission of his own powerlessness – that progress towards peace was now unlikely unless the Serbs 'sustained some serious losses on the ground'.[121] Now that those losses had occurred, the allies hoped that the Bosnian Serb leadership would demonstrate a more conciliatory stance and be prepared to negotiate peace-terms before it lost any more territory.[122]

With the Bosnian Serbs appearing vulnerable for perhaps the first time, Clinton saw an opportunity to seize the initiative. He vetoed the Dole-Lieberman bill (for the lifting of the UN arms embargo against the Bosnian government) on 11th August – only the second veto of his presidency – just hours before Congress broke for its summer recess. Publicly, administration officials expressed confidence that

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[119] Chollet (2005), pp. 34-35; Daalder (2000), pp. 77-79.
[120] Robin Knight, 'A scramble in Bosnia. The West threatens 'decisive' airstrikes. Will the Serbs blink?' *US News & World Report*, 31st July, 1995, p. 32; Daalder (2000), pp. 163-164; Di Prizio (2002), p. 105; Murtha (2006), p. 178.
[121] Clinton (2004), p. 667.
[122] Ibid; Murtha (2006), pp. 177-178.

they would convince enough legislators to change their embargo votes between now and Congress' reassembly after the September Labour Day. Privately, however, Clinton harboured doubts over this. He knew that the clock was now ticking for him either to change legislators' minds or appease their frustrations by showing that he had a decisive strategy which America's allies would support.[123] With Bosnia now dominating his presidency, with the world watching the White House in the aftermath of Srebrenica, and with an election year looming, it was clear that any continuation of the transatlantic policy impasse was now out of the question. Notwithstanding the moral imperative to avoid any more Srebrenicas, Clinton was staring down the barrel of a costly defeat on Capitol Hill and, longer term, the likelihood of having to deploy US forces into war-torn Bosnia in the forthcoming election year. 'We need to bust our rear to get a settlement in the next couples of months', Clinton told his national security team; 'If we let this moment slip away, we are history.'[124]

The spur to decisive action was not long in coming. On 28th August, Bosnian Serbs forces shelled a Sarajevo marketplace, killing 37 civilians and wounding a further 85.[125] With Clinton already putting great pressure on the allies to take decisive action against Bosnian Serb forces at the next opportunity (NSA Anthony Lake had been dispatched to Europe with the message that the United States was now prepared to act unilaterally if necessary), this latest atrocity cemented transatlantic resolve. The attack persuaded UNPROFOR commanders to authorise the commencement of *Operation Deliberate Force*, the NATO air campaign whose planning and approval had been in progress since mid-1994.[126] By the time the

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[123] Chollet (2005), pp. 37-38 & 55; 'The Week in Review', *Balkan Watch*, 14th August, 1995.
[124] Stephanopoulos (1999), p. 383; Chollet (2005), pp. 21 & 80.
[125] Daalder (2000), p. 130; Chollet (2005), pp. 24-25 & 59-60.
[126] Stephanopoulos (1999), p. 384. See the details and chronology of 'Operation Deliberate Force' in the AFSOUTH Fact Sheets on NATO's website at: http://www.afsouth.nato.int/factsheets/deliberateforcefactsheet.htm (accessed 1st July 2008).

American diplomatic delegation, headed by US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, arrived in Belgrade on the 30th August for cease-fire negotiations with the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, the largest military action in NATO's history had been underway for 8 hours.[127]

Operation Deliberate Force added considerable weight to the Holbrooke delegation's strenuous diplomatic efforts and on 14th September, NATO's offensive operations were suspended for 72 hours as the warring parties finally agreed to a UN-brokered 'cessation of hostilities' accord. The UN and NATO announced a formal end to *Deliberate Force* on 20th September. A Bosnia-wide cease-fire was then announced by Clinton on 5th October. If it held, it was agreed that the three warring sides would commence formal peace talks in the United States at the month's end.[128]

Having reached agreement with the NATO partners, Clinton then announced on 17th October that a NATO-commanded Implementation Force (IFOR) of 60,000 troops would oversee any agreed peace inside Bosnia. The big news for Americans was that this deployment would comprise 20,000 US troops.[129] In response to media questions over how Congress would respond to this commitment, Clinton replied confidently: 'I believe, in the end, the Congress will support this operation.'[130] Given the considerable and prolonged legislative hostility to his Bosnia policy, Clinton may have been knowingly optimistic in this appraisal. However, over the coming weeks, there would be little to suggest that congressional support was particularly important to the President's Bosnia plans anyway.

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[127] Chollet (2005), pp. 61-63.
[128] 'Operation Deliberate Force'; AFSOUTH Fact Sheet; 'Prelude to Peace: Summer of '95 Was The Turning Point', *USA Today*, 22nd November 1995.
[129] Holbrooke, in Chollet (2005), p. xi.
[130] Hendrickson (1998), p. 250; 'Interview of Secretary of State Warren Christopher', CNN, *Larry King Live*, Thursday 19th October 1995. Accessed 31st October 2006 at: http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/erc/briefing/dossec/1995/9510/951019dossec.html

Making the case for the IFOR deployment: Bosnia *is not* like Vietnam

With the commencement of formal peace talks at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, on 1st November, Washington's use-of-force debates moved back to a more 'conventional' relationship between the White House and the Vietnam Syndrome; namely, with the White House seeking to publicly dispel the Syndrome in its efforts to win public-political support for the likely deployment of US troops.

There was much to dispel. On Capitol Hill, critics decried the IFOR announcement, arguing that the deployment had 'all the makings of a very, very deadly quagmire' and that 'there is no compelling national interest to send young Americans to die in Bosnia'.[131] Some media commentary bordered on the sensational. Castigating any US troop deployment as a 'disastrous blunder', *The Cincinnati Enquirer* referred to '20,000 US troops marching into quicksand in Bosnia' against 'bloodthirsty Serbs', in a 'flammable pit of ethnic hatred, where death has been a fact of life since 1992'. The 'echoes of Vietnam', the editorial asserted, 'are unmistakeable: Another war in which unsupported troops fight for unexplained goals in an ungrateful land.'[132]

The Clinton administration clearly could not remain inactive in the face of such public accusations. The obvious difficulty facing the administration, however, was that Clinton officials themselves had been articulating similar sentiments for at least the previous two years. In recent months alone, Defence Secretary William Perry had publicly declared that Bosnia was not 'grave enough to risk the lives of thousands of our troops' (June), and that America should not become combatants in

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[131] Jim Ramstad, 'No United States Troops to Bosnia'; Remarks in House of Representatives, 25th October 1995.
[132] 'No Way - Sending US troops to Bosnia Would be a Disastrous Blunder', *The Cincinnati Enquirer* editorial, 25th October 1995.

Bosnia because it was 'like Vietnam…a civil war…the most difficult of conflicts to manage' (August). With the administration now seeking to make the case for the possible introduction of IFOR troops into Bosnia, administration officials were *now* strenuously *denying* the Vietnamness of Bosnia, declaring on national television that Vietnam was 'a drastically different situation' to the current crisis. However, the emotive statements of the previous years were unlikely to be forgotten overnight.[133]

Despite its new-found efforts to deny the applicability of the Vietnam analogy, there was much to suggest that the Vietnam Syndrome was infusing the deliberations of the Clinton foreign policy team itself, as it contemplated the possible role and scope of American IFOR troops in Bosnia. Whilst there was broad agreement that IFOR commanders should have 'unlimited authority' to take whatever actions they thought were appropriate, the traditional State-Pentagon schisms (which had been extremely evident during the Reagan administration's engagement with the Lebanese crisis in 1982-1983) quickly emerged over the policy specifics. With its customary caution, the Pentagon advocated a limited IFOR role whilst the 'civilians' at the State Department envisioned a more expansive role which would see, for example, IFOR troops deployed along Bosnia's border, supporting refugee returns and hunting down war criminals. Presidential preference ensured that the cautious Pentagon view prevailed. If anything, Clinton's deployment-aversions had actually *increased* since his announcement of the IFOR commitment and he was deeply worried about the deployment, about incurring casualties and about the dangers of 'mission creep'. The Somalia experience continued to gnaw at him, and he repeated obsessively that

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[133] Daalder (2000), pp. 68-69; William J. Perry, 'Using Military Force When Deterrence Fails'; Prepared statements, 6th August 1995.

American IFOR troops 'would not be rummaging around in the mountains looking for war criminals.'[134]

The President's concerns were vividly evident as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, rhymed off a list of things that US troops would *not do* in Bosnia, when he made the case for the deployment in the House and Senate. He emphasised that IFOR would *not* 'be responsible for the conduct of humanitarian operations….be a police force…conduct nation building…have the mission of disarming', and would not 'move refugees.'[135] However, despite being assured about the modest role US troops would play if deployed to Bosnia, Congress maintained its hostile stance towards Clinton's Bosnia policy and the House overwhelmingly passed (315 to 103; nearly half of the House Democrats voted for it) a non-binding resolution stating that no American troops should be deployed to Bosnia without congressional approval.[136]

Clinton publicly downplayed the significance of the resolution, declaring that the peace process was his priority and that he fully expected 'to consult intensively' with congressional leaders on any significant developments. Stating that it was the American people themselves who had long demanded an end to Bosnia's 'mindless slaughter', he urged Congress to 'focus over the next few days on the peace negotiations' and reminded legislators that 'NATO is the one organisation with the track record and the strength to implement a settlement'. The United States 'is the source of NATO's military strength' and 'must participate' in enforcing any peace

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[134] Clinton cited in Chollet (2005), pp. 127-128 & 131-132.
[135] Shalikashvili cited in Daalder (2000), p. 148.
[136] Chollet (2005), p. 132; 'Bosnia, a vote too far'; 'Read Our Lips': Congress Must Say No To Troops in Bosnia, *Now*', Decision Brief (No. 95-D 86) from the *Center For Security Policy*, 1st November 1995; Peter W. Rodman, 'Precarious peace – US troops in Bosnia', *National Review*, 27th November, 1995. Accessed 1st May 2008 at the *National Review's* website: http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=ODUxYzM1NTJiNzgzZGFjMzcyNTcwMGZmYTQzMmQyMGE=

agreement, Clinton declared; 'there is no substitute for American leadership' on Bosnia.[137]

Engaging Congress

Over the next few weeks, President Clinton repeated his commitment to congressional consultation and continued trying to eradicate the Vietnam Syndrome as critics offered gloomy predictions of the fate awaiting IFOR troops in Bosnia. On the 8th November, Clinton met with congressional leaders. Mindful of Congress' prolonged derision for the stumbling UN mission in Bosnia, he emphasised two key points: firstly, that IFOR would only go into Bosnia to oversee a peace; secondly, that IFOR was under NATO – and *not* UN – command and that if it was deployed, IFOR would be 'militarily formidable'. There would, he promised, be no repeat of UNPROFOR's meekness in any NATO mission.

The next day, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott attempted to give an extensive clarification of the situation. In doing so, he appeared to offer some quite exaggerated reasons as to why a US military presence in Bosnia was now necessary. Talbott began by acknowledging that the administration 'has a tough job of persuasion here on the home front, up on the hill but beyond the beltway as well'. It was not, he admitted, 'self-evident to the American people why a conflict nearly 5,000 miles away…matters enough to justify a heavy investment of our treasure, prestige and military resources.' In explaining why it *did* matter, Talbott proceeded to depict US leadership of IFOR as vital to almost every conceivable aspect of US

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[137] 'The President; Statement on Bosnia Negotiations'; The White House, 31st October 1995.

foreign policy. Without this leadership, he maintained, it was not just American leadership in Europe which was under threat but also 'relations between Russia and America' and 'the spread of post-Communist disorder'. Talbott also warned that 'the entire Muslim world' was watching to see 'whether their co-religionists in Bosnia will be accorded the same rights and protections as other Europeans.' America's commitment to Bosnia, Talbott declared, thus also affected Turkey, Pakistan and Iran. 'High stakes', he declared, 'justify – indeed require – bold action.' This action, Talbott declared, could only be undertaken by NATO. Talbott also addressed the subject of Vietnam, notably the way in which congressional and media deployment-opponents were constantly trying to draw comparisons between Bosnia and Vietnam, in an effort to convince Americans that Bosnia was 'a permanent and hopeless quagmire'. Whilst these depictions were, Talbott declared, intended 'to have, in our ears, cautionary echoes of Vietnam', they were misleading. Reminding his audience that he himself had lived in Yugoslavia for two years, Talbott concluded that the 'cliché about Bosina's "ancient hatreds"' is 'wrong-headed in the extreme'.[138]

Five days later, Clinton sent a nine-page letter to House Speaker Newt Gingrich, reiterating that he would seek a 'congressional expression of support' for US participation in IFOR, *before* any deployment of US troops to Bosnia. There was, Clinton asserted, a 'timely opportunity for Congress to consider and act upon his request'. However, Clinton also stated that he 'must reserve his constitutional prerogatives in this area', thus making it clear that presidential preference on IFOR would continue to eclipse any legislative stipulations which did not meet with stated White House policy. Congress responded obstinately and continued to demand

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[138] 'US Leadership and the Balkan Challenge'; Remarks by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott at the National Press Club, Washington DC, 9th November 1995. Accessed 10th July 2008 at the Department of State's *US Policy in Bosnia* site: http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/bosnia/bostal2.html

formal consultation. Unhappy at the speed with which the President had committed the United States to the IFOR deployment, the House responded by passing HR 2606, prohibiting the use of funds by the Defence Department for the deployment of US ground forces to Bosnia 'unless funds for any such deployment are appropriated' through formal channels.[139] 'The last thing we need', the bill's supporters argued, 'is to get tangled up in another Vietnam-like war and the loss of many American lives'.[140]

Agreement at Dayton – IFOR *will* deploy to Bosnia

On 21st November 1995, after three weeks of poring over maps and haggling over land, the Presidents of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia agreed the terms of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The formal signing of the peace accord was scheduled to take place in Paris on 14th December.[141] However, whilst transatlantic leaders now talked buoyantly of peace, congressional deployment-opponents continued to decry any possibility of seeing US soldiers on Bosnian soil under any circumstances. They reminded Americans that there had been 34 prior ceasefires in Bosnia and that not one of them had held; Dayton was, they insisted, simply the latest pseudo-peace which would surely fail like all the others.[142] With the stumbling UNPROFOR experience still fresh in many Americans' minds, and with senior legislators now talking on

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[139] All comments cited in Grimmett, 1st March, 2007, p. 36.
[140] Comments of Dave Weldon in House of Representatives, 'Prohibition On Funds For Bosnia Deployment', 17th November 1995.
[141] Halberstam (2001), p. 357.
[142] Richard Holbrooke in Chollet (2005), pp. iv & x. America's scepticism over whether peace would prevail was not entirely without foundation – as late as May of 1997, General George Joulwan, Commander-in-Chief of United States European Command (SACEUR), was stating that one of the mission goals for NATO SFOR (Stabilisation Force) troops in the region was 'preventing a spring offensive' inside Bosnia. See 'Department of Defense News Briefing', May 12, 1997. Accessed 5th May 2006 at: http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/1997/t051397_t0512jou.html

national television about Bosnia's 'hateful, warring parties' and warning that with Bosnia's 'formidable' weather and terrain, US forces were 'bound to have casualties', some commentators wondered whether the nation's support for Clinton's IFOR commitment would dwindle.[143]

Aside from the possible perils of the IFOR mission, there were other reasons for legislative disgruntlement over the consequences of the Dayton agreement. Despite his promise to consult Congress on any formal authorisation for the deployment of US forces, Clinton delivered a national address on 27th November which prompted many to conclude that the decision had in fact already been taken. In his speech, Clinton reminded America that he had long refused to send US troops to 'fight a war' in Bosnia and that the forthcoming IFOR mission was *not* to fight but to oversee a peace. Having unambiguously confirmed that US troops *were* to be deployed (with no formal approval from Capitol Hill), Clinton's speech then carefully addressed the reasons why the deployment would not repeat the Vietnam failure. Rejecting any possibility of mission open-endedness, he declared that the IFOR mission was 'clear, limited and achievable'. He then proceeded to address the issue of military casualties:

> But, my fellow Americans, no deployment of American troops is risk-free, and this one may well involve casualties. There may be accidents in the field, or incidents with people who have not given up their hatred. I will take every measure possible to minimize these risks, but we must be prepared for that possibility. As President my most difficult duty is to put the men and women who volunteer to serve our nation in

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[143] Comments from a panel of guests on CNN Late Edition, 26th November 1995; comments of Senator Daniel Coats (Rep. IN), Senator Charles Robb (Dem. VA) and Frank Sessno (host) – transcript available on the *CNN Late Edition* website (accessed 2nd May 2008) at: http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/Bosnia/updates/nov95/11-26/transcript.html

> harm's way when our interests and values demand it. I assume full responsibility for any harm that may come to them. [144]

Clinton concluded by addressing the classic right-wing interpretation of what had gone wrong in Vietnam. Ruling out any possibility that American forces would be forced to go into Bosnia 'with one hand tied behind their backs', he assured Americans that:

> Anyone contemplating any action that would endanger our troops should know this: America protects its own. Anyone-anyone-who takes on our troops will suffer the consequences. We will fight fire with fire-and then some. [145]

Seeking to address legislative concerns, Clinton also stated that if the final details of the IFOR deployment plan met his approval, he would 'immediately send it to Congress and request its support'.[146] Clinton's speech came under immediate criticism. Media critics argued that despite his stated commitment to congressional consultation, the IFOR announcement had clearly already been taken, thus upholding a convention which had reduced Congress to learning about Dayton's developments 'in the newspapers'.[147]

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[144] President's Statements on the Bosnian Peacekeeping Mission'; The White House, 27th November, 1995.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Peter W. Rodman, 'Precarious peace – US troops in Bosnia', *National Review*, 27th November, 1995. Accessed 1st May 2008 at the *National Review's* website: http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=ODUxYzM1NTJiNzgzZGFjMzcyNTcwMGZmYTQzMmQyMGE=

On Capitol Hill, legislators also expressed anger. Americans' questions over Bosnia remained unanswered, Representative Toby Roth (Rep. WI) complained; 'Every lesson we learned in Vietnam has either been forgotten or ignored'.[148]

Even those legislators who *supported* Clinton's IFOR commitment criticised the President for flouting the consultative process and for failing to dispel the Vietnam Syndrome before committing US troops. Whilst declaring his willingness to support the President, Senator Patrick Leahy (Dem. VT) warned Clinton that the IFOR mission was 'fraught with uncertainties and the undeniable likelihood that Americans will be injured or killed.' Americans genuinely feared 'another costly, drawn out quagmire like Vietnam', Leahy argued; 'It is the President's job…to convince the American people that Bosnia is not Vietnam'.[149]

In a prepared statement to the House International Relations and National Security Committee, Defence Secretary Perry sought to dispel these concerns. Perry assured legislators that the forthcoming deployment was 'not a blind plunge into a conflict' and that, whilst the US contingent of 20,000 troops was criticised as excessive by some, 'if we err, I prefer to be on the side of sending in too many.' Further seeking to convince the Committee over the measures taken to protect American troops, Perry asserted that 'The American force will be able to protect itself under any circumstances' and he stated on two further occasions that US troops would be 'well-armed', 'well-trained', and have 'robust rules of engagement'. Perry's message reiterated the message Clinton delivered just three days previously: unlike in

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[148] Toby Roth, 'Is Bosnia Worth Dying For?'; Remarks in House of Representatives, 28th November 1995.
[149] Patrick Leahy, 'American Troops in Bosnia'; Remarks in the Senate, 28th November 1995.

Vietnam, the US military would not be forced to fight with one hand tied behind its back in Bosnia.[150]

Leaving Congress behind

Amidst the wrangling and debating, Clinton's deployment plans continued unhindered. On 4th December, William Perry announced that a 1,400-strong 'enabling force' was to leave for the Balkans, the vanguard of the main contingent of IFOR troops scheduled to deploy after the official peace signing in Paris. After the signing, Perry clarified, about 20,000 US troops would deploy to Bosnia with IFOR and around 5,000 more to Croatia. Two days later President Clinton formally notified Congress of the deployment, declaring that his actions were 'consistent with the War Powers Resolution'. He added that he had also authorised the deployment of around 3,000 US military personnel to Hungary, Italy and Croatia in a supporting role. The force deployment thus actually numbered nearly 30,000 troops, more than had initially been announced.[151]

Congressional debate now reached boiling point, with allusion to the Vietnam experience rife as legislators debated the pros and cons of the deployment and its constitutionality. Indeed, at points, legislators appeared to be arguing as much about the appropriateness of the Vietnam analogy as about the imminent troop deployment itself. Criticising President Clinton's deployment plans – an action he had taken 'without coming to the Senate or the US House of Representatives for permission to do this' – Congressman Robert Dornan (Rep. CA) saw glaring parallels:

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[150] William J. Perry, 'The Deployment of US Troops to Bosnia'; Prepared statement to the House International Relations and National Security Council committees, 30th November 1995.
[151] Clinton's statement cited in Grimmett, 1st March 2007, p. 37.

I remember when the Vietnam War went down the tubes and the fight transferred from the jungles and the fields and the central highlands of Vietnam to the Halls of this Congress. I remember when liberal Democrats were on this floor saying that Johnson, and then Nixon, did not have the constitutional power to absorb 300 and 400 killed in action every week.[152]

However, other legislators disagreed with Mr Dornan's prognosis. Sam Gibbons (Dem. FL) declared that:

> After long consideration, I…support the mission and support the troops that are involved. I was here on the House floor and voted for the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. This is not a Gulf of Tonkin resolution. The Gulf of Tonkin resolution was a thinly disguised declaration of war against the Vietnamese forces. We go this time to keep peace, not to make war. There is a plan. There is a large support from the nations of the world to support this plan. There is acquiescence by the leaders of the combatants involved. Nothing that we do is without risk. We are going to have some casualties, for which we will all feel very sorry. But we cannot sit here or stand here idly and not do anything. Too much is at stake. [153]

As these debates continued, other legislators appeared to simply resign themselves to the inevitability of the imminent deployment – as a disgruntled Henry Hyde (Rep. IL) commented: 'the die is cast, we now have to fall in line.'[154] However, others chose not to acquiesce without challenge and viewed the signing of the Peace Accords in Paris, on December 14th, as a symbolic deadline for Congress to formally act upon its

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[152] Robert Dornan, 'United States Troop Deployments to Bosnia'; Remarks in House of Representatives, 13th December 1995.
[153] Sam Gibbons, 'United States Troop Deployments to Bosnia'; Remarks in House of Representatives, 13th December 1995.
[154] Hyde cited in Hendrickson (1998), p. 252.

opposition to the President's actions. The 13th saw a flurry of activity with legislators rejecting resolutions prohibiting the use of federal funding for the deployment. However, they also formally supported (by 287-141) Resolution 302 which opposed the deployment of US troops to Bosnia but which simultaneously expressed 'pride and admiration' for the US troops to be deployed. That same day, the Senate passed a resolution (S.J. Res. 44) articulating the same sentiment.[155] This somewhat bizarre vote – *for* the troops but *not* for the policy which deployed them – was an admission of defeat as much as a note of defiance from the legislature and demonstrated, once more, congressional unwillingness to seriously test the President's constitutional war powers. Also evident in this instance was the post-Vietnam legislative culture of not wanting to appear unpatriotic ahead of an imminent troop deployment. As Ryan Hendrickson notes, 'both chambers sought to wash their hands of the policy and remain patriotic at the same time.'[156]

Predictably perhaps, there was no effort by either the House or the Senate to reconcile the measures they had passed on the 13th. As Richard Grimmett observes, the IFOR deployment had been formally triggered by the Paris signing and the leadership of both parties apparently believed that nothing would be achieved by a conference on the measures passed.[157] Over 29th and 30th December, 20,000 US troops started deploying to Bosnia. Despite the many legislators who had opposed the deployment, Congress had not managed to curtail any aspect of the deployment whatsoever. The one year time-limit that President Clinton subsequently placed on the troops' mission was purely discretionary and, critics speculated, was announced with the 1996 presidential elections in mind. Congress' inability to challenge White

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[155] Ibid, pp. 37-38; Halberstam (2001), p. 359.
[156] Hendrickson (1998), p. 254.
[157] Grimmett, 1st March 2007, p. 38.

House deployment decisions thus appeared not to have changed, despite the much-touted vigour of the Republican revolution.[158]

Conclusion

The White House's response to the war in Bosnia Herzegovina is an extremely significant event in the study of post-Vietnam presidential deployment decision-making. Whilst the events detailed in this chapter differ markedly from those of the previous two case studies in many respects, they also share some striking similarities. One of the most notable of these is the dominance of the Vietnam Syndrome in the criticisms and justifications espoused throughout the crisis by political and media deployment-opponents. The events detailed in this case study unmistakeably demonstrate that America certainly had not 'kicked' the Vietnam Syndrome by the mid-1990s, despite President Bush's declaration to that effect in the aftermath of the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Once more, this study's focus upon public diplomacy is fully vindicated by the way in which it so vividly exposes the 'presence' of the Syndrome throughout Washington's Bosnia debates.

If the Vietnam Syndrome was evident throughout these debates, it was also extremely evident in White House decision-making throughout this period. Despite optimistic predictions that his assumption of office would draw a line under America's Vietnam preoccupation, President Clinton's handling of the Bosnian crisis proved the ongoing influence of the Vietnam Syndrome upon presidential deployment decision-making. Clinton's lack of foreign policy experience may well have

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[158] Daalder (2000), p. xix.

contributed to this since he found his feet on Bosnia under the advice of a Pentagon whose view of the crisis was 'haunted' by 'memories of America's last great "liberal" intervention, in Vietnam'.[159] As an inexperienced and indecisive foreign policy practitioner, Clinton was understandably influenced by the concerns of towering figures such as Colin Powell and he was disinclined to challenge the expertise of an influential establishment whose favour he was keen to win. Consequently, as George C. Herring notes, the Pentagon's 'obsession' with mission security and the avoidance of casualties largely dictated the terms under which the new President sought to proceed with a strategy for Bosnia.[160]

Given that the military chiefs seemed quite able to stifle Clinton's early deployment-advocacy, and given that he displayed little in the way of inspired leadership throughout most of the crisis, it might seem that Clinton's performance in stewarding America's Bosnia policy was largely *absent* the characteristics and feats we might associate with Schlesinger's 'Imperial President' depiction. However, there is little doubt that America's Bosnia policy proceeded largely at Clinton's own behest. He largely stuck fast to his own policy choices, despite the fact that these choices persistently displeased *both* sides of Washington's intervention-nonintervention debates: he refused to *formally* lift the arms embargo for the Bosnian government; he also refused to deploy US ground forces into Bosnia whilst hostilities persisted, despite coming under considerable pressure to respond forcefully to what Bosnian Serb forces were doing to Bosnia's civilians. Clinton also turned a blind eye to the covert weapons supply-line from Iran to Bosnia, a process which was a clear violation of the UN arms embargo. Clinton's quiet acquiescence on this issue (a stance which mirrored that of his predecessor) could easily be viewed as a justifiable

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[159] McCrisken (2003), p. 163; Allin (2002), pp. 16 & 17
[160] George C. Herring, 'The Impact of the Vietnam War on the US Military', in Neu (2000), p. 80.

concession to a besieged Bosnian government – however, critics would also argue (perhaps with some justification) that it was a glaring example of the kind of executive branch secrecy so associated with the Vietnam years and the censures associated with the 'Imperial Presidency'.[161]

Clinton's ultimate commitment to deploy US forces to Bosnia was also highly resonant of the presidential imperiousness depicted by Schlesinger. On the one hand, it is clear that the timing of the deployment was very much influenced by Clinton's concerns about domestic opinion – he made it clear that he did not want to leave himself in a position where he was forced to deploy US forces into war-torn Bosnia in an election year. He thus pushed to end the crisis and have US troops overseeing a peaceful Bosnia *before* the onset of 1996.[162] By the same token, however, the decision to deploy US forces to Bosnia clearly contravened what the Pentagon had long advised and also what much of public-political America appeared to support. Indeed, whilst it was clear by the autumn of 1995 that keeping US forces *out* of Bosnia was not only increasingly unlikely but also increasingly indefensible as the atrocities escalated, it was also the case that congressional opposition was growing as Clinton pushed to bring the crisis to a finale.

Notwithstanding the furore on Capitol Hill, it seemed that as the peace negotiations progressed and the IFOR mission became more and more a reality, the scepticism espoused by many political, military and elite commentators over the durability of Bosnia's peace may have had an impact upon the broader American public. Whilst opinion polls had persistently suggested significant domestic support for US involvement in multilateral ground operations inside Bosnia, national opinion polls taken in early January 1996 (less than a fortnight after US IFOR troops were

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[161] See Chollet (2005), p. 36.
[162] Sobel (2001), p. 228.

deployed to Bosnia) suggested – quite incredibly – that less than 36% of those Americans polled now supported the deployment.[163] This apparently dramatic diminution perhaps says as much about the fickleness of 'public opinion' as it does about President Clinton's willingness to take tough political decisions which may be domestically unpopular, ahead of an election year.

Clinton may thus not have always demonstrated the vigour and confidence that one might associate with an 'Imperial President'. However, when viewed broadly, it is clear that there was not a single aspect of America's Bosnia policy which did not transpire at his behest. Indeed, in the last few months of 1995, Clinton was arguably as imperious as his two predecessors as he pushed to initiate the NATO air offensive, the peace negotiations *and* the subsequent IFOR deployment. Clinton's performance throughout the whole period examined in this case study suggests that even where Presidents do not have the wherewithal to act decisively vis-à-vis a foreign crisis, and even when they are coming under intense domestic criticism, they have near-absolute authority to *refuse* actions demanded by other domestic and international public-political actors. Any US military actions which *do* occur invariably do so *only if the President sees fit to order them*.

Another glaring aspect of this episode is the way in which, for a long period, the Vietnam analogy was employed as much by the White House as it was by deployment-opponents in Congress and in the media. The prolonged White House 'use' of the Vietnam analogy for much of this period was very significant indeed and may have had a considerable impact upon how America viewed the deployment of US troops to Bosnia. Initially convinced that he would take a stronger and more morally upstanding stance towards the crisis than President Bush had, there is every

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[163] Poll cited by Richard Holbrooke, in Chollet (2005), p. xi. No source given.

reason to suspect that if he had chosen to do so, President Clinton could have rallied broad domestic support for deploying US troops into Bosnia. Such was the public anger at the atrocities being waged against Bosnia's civilian population, and such was the disillusionment levelled at the preceding Bush administration for its own inaction towards the crisis, it seems highly likely that Clinton could have emphasised the moral imperative for him to demonstrate 'American values' and act to halt the atrocities. Had he done so, he might well have managed to win round many of those – particularly on Capitol Hill – who appeared to oppose a US-led ground offensive into Bosnia. However, as this study amply demonstrates, Clinton's electioneering bravado quickly crumbled when he took office. After the allies rejected Clinton's preferred policy of 'lift-and-strike', the Clinton administration begin copying its predecessor in publicly drawing parallels between Bosnia and Vietnam; invoking the Vietnam analogy was seen as a way of both publicly justifying its inability to conjure up a forceful alternative strategy *and* of dampening calls for US military intervention.

Even if President Clinton *did* genuinely see comparisons between Vietnam and Bosnia, it may have been unwise of him to publicly make such comparisons since – in the view of many senior advisors – the introduction of US troops into Bosnia at some point was inevitable.[164] Whether it was to oversee the withdrawal of a failing UNPROFOR mission, or in the event of a binding cease-fire, Clinton had decreed that US troops *would* go into Bosnia. Thus, whilst comparing Bosnia to Vietnam may have been effective in blunting domestic deployment-advocacy during its prolonged struggle with the crisis, the Clinton administration's 'endorsement' of the Vietnam analogy remained resonant when it changed its stance to one of assertive engagement with the crisis. It ensured that the Vietnam Syndrome continued to infuse much of

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[164] Author interview with General George Joulwan (USA, retired), Arlington, Virginia, 11th May 2006.

America's thinking on US involvement in Bosnia, even as the administration worked to generate support for the IFOR deployment. The critical congressional response to the IFOR announcement in particular was dominated by reference to the Vietnam experience and the 'Vietnamness' of Bosnia. This is hardly surprising; Americans were highly unlikely to support the deployment of US troops to a region which the White House had been likening to Vietnam for nearly four years.

The White House's prolonged willingness to see Vietnam dominating America's Bosnia debates was thus one of the most striking aspects of Washington's response to the Bosnian War. When it wanted Americans to support its policy of *withholding* US troops from Bosnia, the White House sought to convince them that Bosnia resembled Vietnam. When, under Clinton's stewardship, it wanted them to support its policy of *deploying US troops into Bosnia*, it sought to convince them that it did not. It would be hard to find a more glaring example of the politicisation of the Vietnam Syndrome than this.

Similarly to the two previous case studies, there was little consensus within the Clinton administration over what conditions should be attached to the use of military force. Differences were once again evident in the views emanating from the State and Defence Departments. The administration's overall disjointedness did little to resolve these disputes and Clinton seemed in large part responsible for this. However, the administration's prolonged prevarications over what form the US Bosnia policy should take could also be read another way; not as a result of a conceptual poverty and lack of leadership on the part of the Commander-in-Chief, but as an example of a President simply digging in his heels and refusing to enact policy options he did not support, quite prepared to ride out the political storm until events were more conducive to the policies he *did* want to enact. Having dismissed a ground

intervention into Bosnia, and with no other appealing options, Clinton's 'dithering' could thus equally be depicted as presidential preference prevailing, despite the domestic and international pressure to 'do something' about Bosnia. When he eventually did decide to sanction a ground intervention, it was Clinton's own preferences (namely, those which held the smallest risk to American troops) which settled the deployment disagreements between the Defence and State Departments.

In his policy deliberations with the military, Clinton demonstrated some similarities with his predecessors. He was clearly mindful of the expertise provided by the military chiefs; he was probably more deferential to their views than were Reagan and Bush, especially in the early stages of his presidency. However, Robert DiPrizio speculates that Clinton's prolonged deployment reluctance was down to an array of other factors – domestic and international – and to *his own* preferences; *not* to military resistance. Indeed, the military's reluctance to see US troops in Bosnia certainly did not stop Clinton from considering a ground intervention on at least two occasions, something he ordered the Pentagon to explore. Nor did it stop him from deploying US troops in late December of 1995, when many US military figures were sceptical that Bosnia's fragile peace would hold. As had been the case when Presidents Bush and Reagan were deliberating their responses to the crises in Kuwait and Lebanon, the hierarchical nature of White House use-of-force decision-making was clearly evident; the military chiefs may have *opposed* deployment but they willingly provided the support to the President once he decided that this was his chosen course of action.[165]

There is little doubt that Clinton shared the Pentagon's concerns, however, and this is vividly evident when one examines his use-of-force decisions throughout this

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[165] DiPrizio (2002), p. 161.

episode. He consistently played the 'safe card' by adhering to a policy which relied upon air-power to halt the Bosnian Serb onslaught. He also resisted ground intervention until there was a formal cessation of hostilities. Only then did he deploy US troops into Bosnia with enough firepower, with sufficiently robust rules-of-engagement and with such a restricted mandate that IFOR did not lose one troop to hostile fire throughout its entire mission.[166] In dictating the terms of the IFOR deployment – and it was Clinton who ultimately decided what US troops would and would not do in Bosnia – Clinton's approach largely mirrored that of the Bush Persian Gulf deployment, in that casualty-avoidance was the over-riding concern. The 'overwhelming force' approach, erring on the side of having too many troops, and a mandate whose studied caution minimised confrontation, greatly diminished the chances that US troops would find themselves in 'another Vietnam'.

Clinton may have appeared more amenable than his predecessors to congressional involvement. He paid significant lip service to recognising the necessity for congressional partnership over Bosnia and, in PDD-25, he formally volunteered a greater legislative say in UN military-peacekeeping operations.[167] However, as was evidenced in the previous two case studies, presidential promise and presidential action do not always coincide where Congress is concerned and where it is the use of force which is the issue. Clinton *did* consult Congress over the developments in his Bosnia policy but he typically did so *ex post facto*. Like his predecessors, Clinton consistently reminded legislators of his powers as Commander-in-Chief and he was more than willing to risk congressional wrath in taking decisions that Congress disagreed with. Furthermore, in refusing to accede to congressional demands to lift the arms embargo (at least officially), Clinton openly subordinated

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[166] Author interview with General George Joulwan (USA, retired), Arlington, Virginia, 11th May 2006.
[167] Sewall (2002), p. 198.

Congress' wishes to those of the French and British governments. Once more, this shows that what Congress wants typically pales into insignificance if it is not what the President wants. It also shows that the wishes and demands of *external*, non-American, actors are often of greater significance to White House use-of-force deliberations than those of Congress. Indeed throughout the crisis, US policy over Bosnia was significantly influenced by the wishes of key UN and NATO partners, giving legislators justifiable reasons for asking where Congress really stands at such times.

Nonetheless, there is little doubt that – as was evidenced in the two previous case studies – Congress often proves itself to be a willing deferent. Clinton's 'Bosnia policy' relied heavily upon retaliatory air-strikes throughout 1994 and 1995. However, despite the fact that he typically only notified Congress of bombing sorties *after* they had occurred, Ryan Hendrickson observes that 'there was virtually no congressional challenge to Clinton's legal authority to conduct the bombings. Constitutional questions on Clinton's authority to use force were simply not addressed'. The onset of the 104th Congress did little to change this, despite the fact that it may have been the likeliest moment in recent decades at which a congressional challenge to White House use-of-force authority might have evidenced itself. Facing a hostile Republican majority in both Houses, and a swathe of opposition in Republican circles to US participation in both UN peacekeeping *and* in Bosnia itself, Clinton's designs for Bosnia might conceivably have run aground.[168] In fact, this did not happen. For all its bluster and dissent, Congress ultimately proved little obstacle to President Clinton's *decisions* on Bosnia, to his *funding* of Bosnia policy, or to his *deployment* of troops.

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[168] Hendrickson (1998), pp. 241-242 & 248.

Clinton might be depicted as being similarly dismissive of the broader public mood during his handling of the Bosnian War. He remains known as a President who *was* influenced by public opinion; indeed, 'placement of polls over principle' became a 'frequent lament' of the Clinton presidency.[169] Despite this popular depiction, Clinton's constant interest in his public standing did not necessarily mean that public opinion actually *steered* his policy decisions. In fact, whilst his prolonged indecision over Bosnia can perhaps be attributed to his efforts to produce a decisive, effective Bosnia policy which had broad domestic approval (a preoccupation which is surely common to all policymakers operating in liberal democratic political systems), he ultimately did not shirk from taking tough decisions which flew in the face of what the American people appeared to want. Clinton's Bosnia policy may well have been hamstrung for so long because, as some commentators have contended, he was so obsessed with 'preserving his domestic capital'.[170] However, there is little doubt that Clinton was fully aware of the considerable domestic resistance to his Bosnia deployment. For all that they had long appeared to support multilateral military action on the ground inside Bosnia, the Dayton Agreement was criticised by many political and elite commentators in the United States as being destined to fail. This elite response must have played no small part in dampening Americans' support for the agreement and the consequent military obligations it placed upon the United States. In fact, America's support for the Dayton Agreement and the subsequent IFOR deployment was by far the lowest support that President Clinton had on any issue at that point in time.[171] Against this critical domestic backdrop, and with the IFOR mission to oversee Bosnia's fragile peace scheduled to commence at the beginning of an election year, Clinton's decision to deploy US troops to Bosnia was

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[169] Henriksen (1996), pp. 13 & 38.
[170] DiPrizio (2002), p. 160.
[171] Richard Holbrooke, in Chollet (2005), p. xi.

brave and very much contradicts the depiction of a President always likely to opt for the popular option.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This study has explored the significance of the Vietnam Syndrome to presidential leadership on the deployment of US forces throughout the post-Vietnam years, between 1982 and 1995. It has sought to illuminate how the Vietnam Syndrome has evidenced itself as Presidents have responded to foreign conflicts, how it has influenced Presidents as they have deliberated the pros and cons of deploying US forces to these conflicts, and how far Presidents have been able to execute and publicly 'sell' their chosen deployment decisions, in the face of the obstacles which are popularly thought to be associated with the Vietnam Syndrome.

In its search for answers, this study adopted a dual-focussed analytical approach which examined both the 'private' sphere of executive branch decision-making *and* the 'public' sphere of political commentary debate and diplomacy. This analysis showed that four characteristics have been both significant *and* recurring in post-Vietnam deployment decision-making in the United States: firstly, that any suggestion that the President will deploy US forces has generated significant public-political attention and debate in the United States; secondly, that at such times, the subject of America's Vietnam experience has quickly emerged to dominate Washington's deployment debates; thirdly, that Presidents' deployment decisions have often little reflected the prevailing mood espoused in these debates – Presidents have consistently taken such decisions based upon their own wishes, even if this has appeared to contravene the public-political mood; fourthly, that Presidents'

deployment decisions have consistently demonstrated many of the concerns so closely associated with the Vietnam Syndrome – deployments of US troops throughout the post-Vietnam era have consistently been planned in ways which have optimised the chances of avoiding bloody or protracted interventions.

It seems clear from the events detailed in this study that the Vietnam Syndrome *has* indeed been very evident at times when the White House has responded to foreign conflicts during the post-Vietnam years. Its expression has perhaps been most discernible in the way in which – consistently throughout this period – key political, military and media actors have publicly invoked various aspects of America's Vietnam experience in order to define the conflict in question, how the President *should* respond to it and how the President is performing as he actually *does* respond to it. Furthermore, in drawing various parallels between the current crisis and the Vietnam experience, it seems that these actors were not simply attempting to draw instructive historical parallels; instead, these comparisons were typically critical in nature and were invariably invoked by *deployment-opponents* as a way of articulating their concerns over seeing US forces sent into combat *and* of how the President was handling the crisis in question.

It seems clear that deployment-opponents in the United States think that if there is one argument which might rally public-political support *against* the deployment of US forces, it is by comparing the current situation to various aspects of America's Vietnam experience. Throughout the events detailed in the thirteen-year period examined in this study, deployment-opponents repeatedly pointed to the same factors – the nature of the conflict in question, the region of the world in which it was taking place, the White House's ignoring of Congress in taking deployment decisions, the speed with which the President was deploying troops, the President's refusal to

enact formal War Powers legislation – as 'evidence' that the White House was duplicating the mistakes of the Vietnam years and thus running the risk of miring the United States in 'another Vietnam'. The constancy of this deployment-opposition, and the subject which has so consistently been invoked to express it, appears to confirm a broad field of literary thought which depicts post-Vietnam America's responses to foreign conflicts as having been significantly influenced by the Vietnam Syndrome.

The study's analysis of Washington's deployment debates proves equally effective in detailing how the White House has publicly responded to the public airing of a subject – Vietnam – which has the potential to sensitise Americans' deployment-aversions at the very time that Presidents may well want these aversions blunted. Whilst the task of rallying domestic support behind the deployment of US forces is doubtless one which American Presidents would have found challenging even if the United States *had not* been involved in a protracted, bloody and morally ambiguous war in Southeast Asia, it seems incontrovertible that the Vietnam experience *has* made this task even more difficult for American Presidents. The Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations all necessarily sought to disavow the Vietnam analogies drawn by deployment-opponents as they sought to build a broad consensus of domestic support for their respective deployments. Each administration found this an extremely difficult task.

Because each administration found itself facing very similar 'Vietnam accusations', there was a considerable continuity in the public diplomacy of the White House across all three episodes, despite the fact that the first deployment examined in this study took place in 1982 at the height of the Cold War and the last one was in late 1995, several years after the Cold War's end. In their efforts to reject the various

Vietnam analogies which threatened to undermine their desired national consensus of support, the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations all repeatedly espoused their commitment to consultation with Congress over the deployment, declared that the deployment in question had a clear mission goal, designated clear parameters for the mission and repeatedly assured Americans that the President was taking very seriously the risk of incurring casualties and miring the United States in 'another Vietnam'.

However, it may be fair to say that there is something of a ritualistic element to these rhetorical interactions. For a start, deployment-opponents may be well aware that their challenges are *highly unlikely* to actually force the President to change his mind about deploying; even the most avid deployment-opponent will perhaps be aware that his or her opposition will not change the mind of a committed President. Despite this, it seems that deployment-opponents see a value in voicing and rallying domestic opposition anyway. This opposition – and the theme which is giving it such an emotive edge – *might* pressure the President to alter *how* he is handling the crisis in question (perhaps to consult more with Congress, for example); it might also prompt the President to reassess the scope of the deployment to come. At the very least, deployment-opponents' criticisms serve notice to both the White House and the American public-political arena that the deployment in question is *not* roundly supported and that the President may face serious political consequences if his deployment should go awry.

If there is a somewhat ritualistic element to these deployment debates, it may also be evident when one considers the White House's efforts to publicly 'sell' its deployment decisions. Indeed, critics might point to one key reason why these White House 'efforts' might be decried as not being genuine concessions to the 'democratic

ideal.' Namely that, as the case studies make quite clear, for all the White House's public diplomatic efforts, the actual deployment of US forces is *not* dependent upon its success in swaying the American public-political arena behind the deployment in question. It seems perfectly clear that if the President decides to deploy US forces, his deployment plans – and the deployment itself – proceed apace, even in the face of considerable public-political opposition and even if the White House is unsuccessful in dispelling this opposition through its public communications.

The events detailed thus appear to confirm two things of considerable interest to the focus of this study. Firstly, there *is* considerable evidence that a Vietnam Syndrome is 'at work' in the American public-political arena at times when the deployment of US forces is seen to be a possibility; secondly, that the label 'Imperial Presidency' is one which can *still* be justifiably applied to the President in the area of deployment decision-making, despite the oft-cited assertion that the Vietnam Syndrome has presented White House with a considerable array of obstacles in this area. The Vietnam Syndrome may well have made an already-difficult task – 'selling' force deployments to the American public-political arena – even harder for Presidents; however, the case studies also show that unsuccessful 'selling' has done nothing to arrest force deployments if President have decided that that is the appropriate course of action.

Congress: a junior role in the executive-legislative relationship

This study not only confirms the President's status as the locus of authority on the issue of deploying US forces; it also exposes the implications that this status has for Congress' ability to assume its constitutionally mandated role in this area. The case studies demonstrate clearly that despite Congress' constitutional empowerments with respect to the use of US forces, and the formal galvanising of these powers with the enactment of the 1973 War Powers Act, Congress has remained very much a junior partner to the White House as the United States has responded to foreign conflicts throughout the post-Vietnam years. Presidents have consistently marginalised the legislature as they have taken use-of-force decisions during this period. When they *have* consulted Congress, this consultation has typically been *ex post facto* and has often been decried by critics as being merely ritualistic, with the issue under 'consultation' already having been decided upon by the President.

There are several aspects to this marginalisation of Congress. One is the way in which the wishes and demands of *external*, non-American, actors frequently appear to be of greater significance to the President's use-of-force considerations than those of Congress, despite the fact that legislators are democratically elected representatives of the American people. Chapters 4-6 show that the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations dealt extensively with an array of foreign states and inter-state organisations as they sought to respond effectively to international conflicts. These 'foreign partners' were not only frequently informed of developments or proposed White House policy details *before* the legislature was; these 'foreign partners' also had an influence on White House decision-making which the legislature did not

appear to enjoy at any time in the thirteen-year period examined in this study. For example, President Reagan effectively bypassed Congress when he gave his chief negotiator Philip Habib permission to pledge US forces to oversee a PLO withdrawal from Beirut, during the latter's peace negotiations in June and July of 1982. President Bush eschewed congressional consultation in a similar manner as he marshalled the international response to Iraq's incursion into Kuwait. Bush sanctioned staged deployments of US troops to the Persian Gulf at his own discretion, typically only informing Congress after the fact. Throughout these deployments, President Bush was also in touch with an array of national governments in an effort to ensure that US troops would not be the only ones lining up to face the Iraqi Army. In arranging for contingents of US troops to be sent to 'defend' Saudi Arabia, for example, Bush liaised with Saudi government and military officials as Congress remained largely in the dark, awaiting clarification from the White House as to how events were developing. Chapter 6 showed that in trying to craft an effective transatlantic response to the Bosnian conflict, President Clinton tethered America's Bosnia policy for nearly two-and-a-half years to the wishes of America's key European allies, France and Britain. With Clinton determined to maintain the Anglo-French commitment to UNPROFOR, the wishes of Congress – for a lifting of the arms embargo, for a US policy pathway which deviated away from the UN pathway, and for a more vigorous air-strike policy at certain times during the conflict – were repeatedly disregarded by the President. Furthermore, whilst Congress repeatedly demands that the arms embargo be lifted against the Bosnian Muslims – something Clinton repeatedly told legislators he would not do; he also vetoed a House bill aimed at formally ordering such a lifting – it is clear that Congress' marginalisation over Bosnia went deeper than even the most cynical legislators might have imagined. In

fact, both the Bush *and* the Clinton White Houses had known that arms *were* being shipped from Iran, via Croatia, to the Bosnian Muslims, in clear contravention of United Nations' arms embargo and without the knowledge of legislators, for some considerable time. Whilst this supply programme has justifiably been seen as a necessary lifeline to Bosnian Muslim forces and a major factor in keeping 'the Sarajevo government alive at a time when its survival hung by a thread', it is a clear example of how the White House can enjoy the monopoly on information vis-à-vis Congress.[1]

If it is *what the President wants* which typically steers the deployment of US forces, is also clear that the wishes of key foreign actors can sometimes define what it is that the President 'wants' at any given point in his engagement with a foreign conflict. What the elected political body in the United States may want at such times can be, if it does not match the President's wants, almost an irrelevance. Congress' wishes, especially if they are not being met by the President, may well underpin the heated executive-legislative debates on the crisis in question and may also do much to influence the media's take on the crisis and how the President is dealing with it. Nonetheless, this is clearly not the same as influencing the actual policymaking process itself.

How far is Congress able to challenge this White House imperiousness? The case studies show that Congress has tried to do so repeatedly throughout the post-Vietnam years. Legislators have been particularly insistent on their right to decision-making involvement because of their empowerments articulated in the 1973 War Powers Act. However, it is clear that Presidents have consistently pointed to their own empowerments and their assumed dominance of the interpretation of crises, in

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[1] Holbrooke (1999), pp. 50-52.

order to exclude congressional input. In doing so, they have frequently rendered the War Powers Act meaningless. The Act clearly *does* represent a significant *notional* hurdle to the President's ability to dominate use-of-force decision-making since it permits congressional oversight over any US mission which might see US troops involved in 'hostilities', or indeed any situation in which hostilities are deemed to be 'imminent'. Because of these stringent – and apparently specific – designations for legislative involvement in crises which may not see US forces involved in actual war-fighting operations, the enactment of the War Powers Act was initially regarded as something which would bring executive-legislative equivalence to deployment decision-making. This clearly has not happened.

Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton all repeatedly rejected congressional demands to enact War Powers authority for Congress as they sought to commandeer America's responses to the crises in Lebanon, Kuwait and Bosnia. President Reagan's eventual agreeing to the enactment of the War Powers resolutions for the Lebanon deployment might perhaps be viewed as an example of a disgruntled Congress placing pressure on the White House and forcing a say in a major US military operation. In fact, the eventual involvement of Congress through its War Powers does not detract from the fact that Congress was *not* consulted on the two occasions that President Reagan actually sent the Marines to Beirut (the initial MNF deployment and then the re-deployment of the MNF after the refugee camp massacres). Such a perspective would also overlook one very significant thing: that Reagan's agreeing to bring the Lebanon deployment under War Powers authority was done *at his own volition*. In fact, this concession to Congress worked out very well for Reagan: not only did the War Powers agreement prompt Congress to grant Reagan an extended mission-time of 18 months for the deployment if he felt he needed it (a

significant period of time; possibly even longer than Reagan himself had envisioned the Marines would be in Lebanon for); the agreement between the White House and Congress was also broadly read as a tacit congressional approval of the deployment, thus minimising the chances that Congress could now reasonably criticise it or the President. This was a considerable boon to President Reagan at this point as the mission was becoming increasingly perilous and domestic unrest over the US presence in Beirut was growing. Reagan's actions may be deemed devious, even cynical, but they were also both inspired and timely, and they vividly demonstrate a President exercising his authority over Congress in the most enterprising manner.

Rather than being a unique example, such presidential enterprise seems to be a somewhat common reflection both of how Presidents view their position vis-à-vis Congress *and* how they often only 'collaborate' with Congress if it suits them to do so. Indeed, even where a new President has espoused a genuine commitment to try and establish a more fruitful executive-legislative foreign policy relationship, it seems that the emergence of a foreign crisis inevitably undermines this commitment and produces a near-reflexive shift towards executive branch 'unilateralism' and presidential imperiousness. For example, after the bitter executive-legislative wrangling which had dogged the Bush presidency, there was a feeling that Bill Clinton would seek to smooth executive-legislative relations once he took office. Some commentators predicted that in the field of international affairs in particular, Clinton's approach would be in keeping with a Democratic party that had, in the wake of the Vietnam War, 'striven to restrain presidential aggrandizement in foreign policy'. However, as the Bosnia case study showed, Clinton's good intentions for a more positive White House engagement with Capitol Hill quickly evaporated as he strove to lead American policy on the major foreign policy issue of his presidency.

Indeed, Clinton's foreign policymaking was decried by some critics as being 'positively Nixonian in its breadth and audacity'; Gene Healy goes as far as to say that by the end of his second term, the 'Imperial Presidency' was 'as unconstrained and as menacing as it had been at any time since the Vietnam War'.[2]

Whilst these accusations may well have considerable veracity and may do much to sustain criticisms of presidential unaccountability on the issue of deployment decision-making, it could also be argued that Congress is very much implicated in its own marginalisation. Indeed, the events detailed in the case studies do much to confirm this. Whilst a complex mixture of bipartisanship, deference to the presidency, and a collective commitment to the 'national interest' often stop the legislature from challenging Presidents too far as they seek to steer a US response to foreign crises, even strongly partisan legislatures who are committed to bringing the President to task over his policy overstretch frequently fail to manage this. The actions of the Republican-dominated 104th Congress – detailed in chapter 6 – provide perhaps the best example of this seeming legislative inability to seriously challenge the White House over crisis foreign policymaking. However, there is little to guarantee that, even if it wanted to, an earnest Congress *could* actually assume this role on the issue of deploying US forces. The most pessimistic conclusion that one might draw from the executive-legislative interactions detailed in this study is that the democracy-sustaining processes of canvassing, commentary, debate and opposition certainly *do* evidence themselves at times when the President is contemplating force deployments – but that they do so almost ritualistically, and at the margins of the decision-making process itself.

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[2] Gene Healy, 'Arrogance of Power Reborn: The Imperial Presidency and Foreign Policy in the Clinton Years', *CATO Policy Analysis* , No. 389, 13th December, 2000, The CATO Institute. Accessed 14th March 2008, available at: http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-389es.html

A rhetorical presidency

The case studies also find that in the face of congressional demands for consultation and involvement, Presidents have been able to demonstrate and maintain their use-of-force dominance as much by what they *say* as by what they *do*. Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton all used forceful and deflective rhetoric in order to prevent congressional intrusion where they did not want it. During all three crises, it was the President himself – with his greater access to information and his acknowledged authority on any given crisis – who first designated the nature of the crisis, its significance to the United States and – consequently – why he should or should not sanction a military response to it.

Having examined the rhetorical jousting which typically unfolds between the White House and Capitol Hill at such times, it seems clear that the President's rhetoric is also sufficient to render Congress' War Powers authority effectively impotent. In seeking to avoid what they clearly view as the unwelcome concession of having to include Congress in deployment-planning, Presidents have simply denied any need to enact the War Powers resolutions. Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton repeatedly declared that their consultations with Congress came under the auspices of their constitutional empowerments as Commander-in-Chief and *not* through any obligation pertaining to the War Powers resolutions. This simple interpretation (one which was given considerable validation in the light of the 1983 Chadha Supreme Court ruling, which decreed legislative vetoes unconstitutional) clearly has significant implications for Congress' chances of having a say; it also amply demonstrates the President's ability to ostracise Congress with one simple sentence of denial.[3] All

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[3] Grimmett, 1st May, 2007, pp. 8-9.

three Presidents examined in this study explicitly articulated that this was the only justification they needed for taking the actions they did. The President's interpretation of events is, it seems, near-definitive in heralding the role he envisions for Congress on any given crisis.

Of the three deployments, White House stubbornness in refusing to enact War Powers authority for Congress was uniform. In only one of the three cases did the President agree to submit a deployment to this oversight. In this instance, the White House's admission that US forces were involved in 'hostilities' (the very 'action' which is meant to formally trigger congressional oversight under the War Powers Act) was a very long time in coming and – as discussed above – was only announced because the President in question (Reagan) saw fit to make the concession. Indeed, as he warded off Congress' efforts to enact War Powers authority over the Lebanon deployment, Reagan's obduracy in denying that 'hostilities' were present in Beirut reached quite absurd levels – he continued to deny 'hostilities' even as US Marines were involved in skirmishes and were coming under attack in Beirut. Reagan's repeated denials of any need to submit the Marines' mission to congressional oversight was a glaring example of the President's interpretive dominance at such times and of how this dominance can be crucial in justifying policy. For Reagan, the equation was quite simple: all he needed to do was declare that 'hostilities are not imminent' and then, as far as he was concerned, that was that – there were no grounds to enact the War Powers resolutions.

The exposure of these dynamics is not only intriguing; it also thoroughly vindicates the decision to focus upon Washington's public-political deployment debates, especially the rhetorical haggling which occurs between the White House and Capitol Hill when such a recourse is being proposed. This focus upon the debates *as*

well as the policymaking process which they surround, effectively exposes not just how the Vietnam Syndrome typically manifests itself as the President contemplates his response to a foreign conflict; it also shows that the President's use-of-force dominance arises from both his willingness and ability to take the vital decisions *and* from his ability to assume interpretive dominance of the decision-making process. This interpretive dominance allows the President both to justify his chosen policy stances *and* repel legislative demands that he alter them. It may appear trite to assert that 'what the President says, goes' at such times; however this interpretation seems to be a most appropriate summary of the dynamics which exist in Washington DC, at times when the President is considering his response to a foreign conflict.

The definitiveness of the White House's 'take' on a crisis is exposed in a different, but no less intriguing, way in chapter 6. A significant characteristic of the White House's response to the conflict in Bosnia Herzegovina was the way in which Presidents Bush and Clinton both seemed to 'use' the Vietnam Syndrome in their efforts to convince Americans that US forces should *not* be sent to Bosnia. However, this willingness to publicly accentuate the 'Vietnamness' of Bosnia promptly ceased when President Clinton decided to deploy US troops as part of the IFOR mission in late 1995. At this point, now trying to 'sell' a completely different stance on the crisis, the Clinton foreign policy team performed a similarly dramatic *volte-face* in its public diplomacy, promptly adopting the 'standard' White House practice of publicly *rejecting* Vietnam analogies ahead of a forthcoming force deployment.

Put simply, this episode showed that when the Clinton White House wanted Americans to support the *withholding* of US troops from Bosnia, it compared the conflict to Vietnam; when it wanted them to support the *deployment* of US troops to Bosnia, it rejected those comparisons. America's willingness to accept these

glaringly contradictory depictions was far from vigorous; having done much to foment the 'Vietnam frenzy' over Bosnia, the Clinton administration's efforts to suddenly *deny* the 'Vietnamness' of Bosnia appeared almost mendacious and deployment-critics – notably on Capitol Hill – simply refused to be swayed by the White House's new-found interpretation of the crisis. However, the raucous buzzing of 'Vietnam radars' in Washington did not stop President Clinton from sending US troops into Bosnia. He may have failed to take public opinion with him but this *did not* stop the troops from being deployed.

This episode clearly demonstrates that 'what the President says, goes' at such times. The White House was able to offer an emotive interpretation of the crisis at one point and then blatantly reject that interpretation a short time later. Regardless how the American public-political arena responded to these incongruous interpretations, the President's policy proceeded apace. Given their seemingly unassailable dominance of this policy area, it seems that Presidents' deployment decisions will be implemented, even if the reasons given for those decisions appear unsound, inconsistent or unpersuasive.

It is thus fair to conclude that whilst the emergence of the Vietnam Syndrome has undoubtedly 'raised the bar' in terms of what the White House has to do in its efforts to win domestic support for force deployments during the post-Vietnam years, there is no evidence that the Syndrome has wrested deployment authority away from the White House. Nor does this study find any evidence to support the notion that an ascendant post-Vietnam Congress has made 'spectacular inroads' into the making of US foreign policy – at least on the most serious policy decision of all; deploying US troops.[4] In fact, any notion of executive-legislative equivalence on this issue has been

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[4] Foley & Owens (1996), p. 373.

unambiguously refuted. The study clearly demonstrates that it is not just in the conceptualising and taking of use-of-force decisions that Presidents have continued to dominate this policy area. Perhaps a less evident aspect of the 'Imperial Presidency' is the extent to which it is a 'rhetorical presidency', one which sees the President's use-of-force dominance evidence itself not just in his willingness and ability to take deployment decisions but also – inextricably linked – in the way in which his interpretive dominance is such a central element in the execution of these decisions.

US Presidents, the Vietnam Syndrome and the steering of post-Vietnam US foreign policy

Despite the President's continuing dominance of the processes which see US forces deployed to foreign conflicts, and despite the fact that the Vietnam Syndrome has *not* stopped willing Presidents from sanctioning this action throughout the post-Vietnam years, there is little doubt that post-Vietnam Presidents *have* been considerably influenced by the Syndrome. Not only has the Vietnam Syndrome been pivotal in shaping the visions that some Presidents have articulated for their presidencies; it has also been a concern for the White House as it has deliberated the ramifications of, and strategies for, using military force.

It is clearly *not* just at times when they have deployed US forces that American Presidents have deemed it necessary to acknowledge and address the Vietnam Syndrome. The Cold War did much to place the Vietnam experience at the very heart of the presidential agenda. Presidents Reagan and Bush were both Cold War Presidents (although the Cold War was over by the time President Bush responded to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait) and the imperatives of the standoff against

Moscow were highly influential in making these men view the eradication of the Vietnam Syndrome as a key objective of their presidencies. Like many post-Vietnam conservatives, both Reagan and Bush viewed the Vietnam Syndrome as a debilitating national weakness at a time when a strong, confident United States was fundamental to defeating the threat of international Communism. For Bill Clinton, the first President to take office without the guiding parameters and imperatives of the Cold War, the dispelling of Vietnam's shadows seemed to be of less importance in defining a broad vision for his presidency. Nevertheless, like both his predecessors, the Vietnam experience did much to frame how he was viewed as a President, even before he won office.

In some ways, the ending of the Cold War rendered much of the 'anti-Syndrome' forces' mission redundant. Absent the Soviet threat, there initially appeared to be no need to uphold Americans' tacit deployment-readiness. If Vietnam's shadows *were* still stifling Americans' willingness to support the use of US forces, then it seemed that these anxieties were now of less significance to the White House. Absent the threat from Moscow, and with the United States now the world's sole remaining superpower, it was hard to imagine what threats might induce Americans' Vietnam-fears in the 'new world order'. Even so, any possibility that the Vietnam Syndrome could now rest in peace was quickly dispelled by the passage of international events. President Bush quickly found that, to a substantial degree, nothing much had actually changed for the Commander-in-Chief; he still had to take difficult deployment decisions and there was still strident opposition to force deployments from within the American public-political arena. Indeed, the post-Cold War period was barely underway before Bush found himself publicly battling the Vietnam Syndrome as he responded to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Whilst Vietnam's shadows have underpinned domestic deployment-opposition throughout the post-Vietnam years, these shadows have also hung heavily over White House deployment decision-making throughout the same period. Indeed, White House deployment planning has consistently been dominated by two key emphases: mission brevity and casualty avoidance. Even Ronald Reagan, the champion of the 'anti-Syndrome forces', had these imperatives etched all over his Lebanon deployment. Beginning with his acceding to the Pentagon's request to prematurely withdraw the first MNF contingent from Lebanon (even although they had been in the country for only half of their mandated 30-day mission), Reagan rejected, at several points, the opportunity to increase the US military presence on the ground inside Lebanon. His military 'escalations' came in the form that would come to be an increasingly preferred option for US military planners throughout the post-Vietnam years – bombardments from sea and air.

The bloody finale to the US mission in Lebanon ensured that an *even more* cautious approach to force deployments would be evident in the White House's post-Lebanon deployment decisions. It is probably not overstating it to say that the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks at Beirut airport set in motion what can only be described as the entrenchment of the Vietnam Syndrome into executive branch use-of-force thinking throughout the 1980s and beyond. This disastrous ending to an ill-defined Lebanon mission enshrined in the collective mindset of the American foreign policy establishment that US military operations should be short, have clearly defined goals, a clear exit strategy and – whilst any mission was underway – employ massive

firepower in order to maximise the chances of eradicating proximal dangers to American troops.[5]

If there was a chance that Lebanon's 'lessons' would be lost due to the relatively quick turnover of 'civilian' administrations coming in and out of government every four years, career military figures in the Pentagon were determined that American troops should never be compromised again by what they viewed as the fickle concerns of the civilian leadership. Within the military hierarchy, the Lebanon experience came to represent a 'mini-Vietnam lesson' which, if the *real* Vietnam had not done so, should teach civilian policymakers, once and for all, what prudent use-of-force decision-making was all about. Whilst the imperatives and pressures of international politics have at times seemed to render these 'lessons' impractical or inappropriate to civilian policy practitioners, successive military chiefs have striven to ensure that they have not been forgotten. Indeed, the military has consistently seen itself, and acted, as a pillar of caution in deployment planning and it has ensured that both Vietnam's *and* Lebanon's shadows have continued to hang over the military planning table as civilian leaders have deliberated the pros and cons of deploying US forces. As this study has shown, General Colin Powell stands out as an example of a senior military practitioner who has sought to infuse White House use-of-force thinking with this caution throughout the post-Vietnam years. However, Powell's predecessors advocated just this caution as they advised President Reagan against involving US troops in the Lebanese conflict.[6] Presidents have thus not always listened to the military chiefs, even if they have been left in no doubt as to their deployment recommendations.

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[5] Author interview with former State Department official, Dr William Schneider Jr. Washington DC, 10th May, 2006.

[6] *PBS Frontline* interview with Colin Powell accessed 29/03/06) at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/powell/1.html

The Lebanon experience undoubtedly nourished the Vietnam Syndrome and it underpinned the obsession with mission-brevity and casualty avoidance which governed subsequent US force deployments. Furthermore, this 'obsession' has had a significant influence on the *types* of conflict that the post-Lebanon White House has been willing to send US forces to. Whilst the amenability of the terrain and the mediocrity of the Iraqi army doubtless dispelled *some* of President Bush's fears over sending US forces to the Persian Gulf, the nature of the military offensive he ordered clearly reflected the various concerns associated with the Vietnam Syndrome. Bush's clear willingness to engage Iraq militarily was castigated by domestic critics as a reincarnation of the hubris which led the United States into Vietnam in the first place; however, the plan he sanctioned for US military operations in the Gulf was dominated by his desire that there would be no repeat of America's military experience in that country. *Operation Desert Storm* was crafted with a laser-like focus on casualty-limitation, modest mission parameters, a clear attainable exit strategy and on attaining international legitimacy for the use of force. The conceptualising of *Operation Desert Storm* also demonstrated other factors which maximised the chances of quick, publicly supportable success. Ensuring that there were sufficient accompanying allies, but in modest numbers and in relatively peripheral roles, meant that the White House could effectively dictate the terms of the offensive but still justify domestically its use of force by pointing to the legitimising presence of a supportive international coalition.

Whilst there were supportive allies *and* legitimacy, many of the other key ingredients were absent as the West sought to make a telling intervention in Bosnia's war. If Iraq's invasion of Kuwait allowed the White House and the Pentagon to plan and execute 'the perfect war against the perfect enemy' in the flat expanses of the

Persian Gulf, Bosnia's conflict was viewed very differently from the White House and it set Vietnam radars buzzing in the Oval Office itself.[7] Not only did it initially appear to be devoid of any obvious US national interests; its complexity, its ferocity and the terrain on which the fighting was taking place meant that attaining the prerequisite quick, decisive victory looked extremely difficult. Firstly, it would likely require a significant commitment of ground troops. Secondly, with three warring sides, it was unclear which of these sides would be the main 'target' in any offensive military intervention. Thirdly, even if a decisive victory could be attained, it would not necessarily eradicate all hostilities. US planners might then be faced with the choice of either having to stay in the region to fight a frustrating, possibly damaging, low-intensity guerrilla war, or withdraw, unable to claim 'decisive victory' because the hostilities were clearly still ongoing, albeit at a lower level.

In short, the ominous ambiguities of the Bosnian War simply could not overcome the Vietnam Syndrome sensitivities in the White House and the Pentagon. Consequently, President Clinton's deliberations over how to engage with the crisis centred around one key question: what strategy, *short of deploying US forces*, stands the best chance of halting the hostilities? Indeed, despite the fact that the Clinton administration toyed with the idea of ordering a ground intervention at several points, intervention-advocacy in the Clinton White House was never anything more than tentative. Clinton's preferred option was always to play the 'safe card', emphasising a policy reliant upon air-power to halt the Serbian onslaught and ruling out ground intervention until there was a formal cessation of hostilities. Only then did he send US troops into Bosnia, with enough firepower, with sufficiently robust rule-of-engagement, and with such a restricted mandate, that they had an optimal chance of

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[7] Sobel (2001), p. 154; Roper (2000), p. 173.

avoiding trouble.[8] This cautious stance from Clinton, in the face of Europe's bloodiest conflict since the Second World War, may well have 'shattered the world's confidence in American leadership and power' – however, it also ensured that US troops did not find themselves in 'another Vietnam' and it kept Clinton's 1996 election hopes alive.[9] Such are the choices that Presidents must make and such are the imperatives which steer Presidents' use-of-force decisions.

The White House's engagement with the Bosnian War was also significant for another reason – the Bush and Clinton administrations' public 'use' of the Vietnam Syndrome in order to justify the prolonged policy of withholding US troops. It was President Bush himself who first did this and his public allusion to the Vietnam experience was not just a significant *volte-face* from his declaration about the Syndrome's demise in the aftermath of *Operation Desert Storm* in January 1991 – it also marked a watershed moment in post-Vietnam American foreign policymaking in that it was the *first time* that a President had wielded the very 'weapon' that had been wielded against Presidents throughout the post-Vietnam years.

The White House's willingness to publicly play on Americans' Vietnam sensitivities during the Bosnian War shows that whilst political and media commentary has often given the impression that the Vietnam Syndrome is an affliction which many Americans *involuntarily* succumb to at times when US forces are to be deployed, the 'status' of the Syndrome is in fact as dynamic, nuanced and exploitable as the political process it infuses. Political actors in the United States – including Presidents themselves – are vividly aware that America's Vietnam experience remains an emotive 'conceptual weapon', one which has the potential to darken Americans' views of a foreign conflict and America's obligation to it.

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[8] Interview with General George Joulwan (USA, retired), Arlington, Virginia, 11th May 2006.
[9] Chollet (2005), p. 1.

Presidents Bush and Clinton, their administrations, and the military chiefs clearly recognised this and proved themselves all too willing to 'use' the Vietnam Syndrome in their efforts to justify staying at the periphery of Bosnia's hostilities. Because of this, by December 1995, the Vietnam Syndrome was as conspicuous as it had been at the height of the Carter presidency.

A continuing Vietnam Syndrome?

Whilst it is perhaps unwise to try to draw definitive conclusions from just three case studies, it is possible to draw upon the events examined in order to make some informed judgements as to what they portend for the foreseeable future of deployment decision-making in Washington DC. It is safe to make four assumptions. Firstly, the White House will continue to be presented with opportunities to deploy US forces to foreign conflicts. Secondly, the White House will continue to dictate whether and how these deployments happen. Thirdly, crises which have a clear interest for the presiding administration and which look *least* likely to contravene the parameters steered by the Vietnam Syndrome (namely, operations which allow US forces to operate unilaterally, with an 'overwhelming force' approach and towards a realistically achievable goal) are *most likely* to invite a US military response. Fourthly, and significantly, the Vietnam experience will continue to loom large over these processes.

Much has been made of the 'lessons' which might be drawn from the Vietnam War; indeed, it is usually Vietnam's ostensible lessons that Americans politicians, journalists and other elite actors are voicing as they articulate their stance on US force deployments. However, given the broad – and perhaps natural – assumption that

America should have learned *something* from Vietnam, this study suggests that whatever Vietnam's 'lessons' *may* be, many of the key elements associated with the Vietnam failure are still very much in place. Because of this, the characteristics and controversies of America's force deployments exposed in this study will likely continue into the foreseeable future.

The steering of America's Vietnam policy, and the secrecy of much of that policy, appeared to diminish America's acceptance of the power bestowed upon the President. As Brian Balogh notes, it also soured America's trust in the 'experts' and 'elites' who surrounded and advised him, and who were broadly implicated in the conceptualisation and execution of the Vietnam endeavour. However, if one key 'lesson' of the Vietnam experience was that America's foreign policymaking had to be more democratically accountable, it seems clear that this has *not* happened. The legislature's efforts to rein in the President's authority in this area have been almost wholly unsuccessful. Similarly, the 'experts' and elites so heavily implicated in the Vietnam failure have, since Vietnam, actually become *more firmly entrenched* in executive branch foreign policy making. As this study has shown, they work closely with the President and they enjoy a decision-making influence that elected legislators simply do not.[10]

If these 'experts' consistently oversaw *successful* use-of-force initiatives, then it is conceivable that public concerns over US forces deployments would perhaps dissipate somewhat. However, whilst the rising culture of 'civilian militarism' in executive branch foreign policymaking in the United States has consistently been rationalised as a way to 'render policymaking more scientific and less political', White House deployment decision-making has in fact consistently shown a dearth of

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[10] Balogh (2000), p. 39; Stone (2002), pp. 7 & 376.

such precision.[11] The events detailed in this study overwhelmingly suggest that deployment decision-making remains an extemporized undertaking, carried out by men and women whose apparent 'expertise' frequently struggles in the face of the complexities and pressures thrown up by trying to plan – and publicly 'sell' – effective military initiatives in a liberal democracy. Indeed, the 'performances' of the foreign policy teams examined in this study are a vivid reminder that statecraft is a *human* activity and subject to very human characteristics and failings.[12]

Thus, whilst Yuen Foong Khong is perhaps correct in observing that the Vietnam experience has forced presidential administrations to ask themselves 'tougher questions' about the use of military force, the fact remains that those asking the questions have continued to operate in the same policymaking bubble they did during the Vietnam years.[13] The figure leading them – the President – *continues* to command the same discretionary authority over the use of US forces and a near-unassailable interpretive dominance of the events and implications of any crisis that the White House might see fit to respond to. And, as the Beirut and Mogadishu setbacks demonstrate, the presidential 'inner-circle' has remained just as vulnerable to ordering ill-fated military strategies.[14] Whilst there is undoubtedly a more intrusive media culture nowadays (ostensibly offering greater scrutiny of these processes and of the men and women steering them), it seems that the use-of-force decision-making pathways which were so heavily implicated in the Vietnam fiasco are still largely in place. The 'checks and balances' which did not stop Presidents Johnson or Nixon have not, it seems, checked their successors when *they* have seen fit to use force.

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[11] Stone (2002), pp. 7 &376.
[12] Robert Jackson (2000), *The Global Covenant. Human Conduct in a World of States*. Oxford University Press, pp. 30-31.
[13] Yuen Foong Khong (1992), *Analogies at War. Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*. Princeton University Press, p. 261.
[14] This is not to suggest, of course, that the Beirut and Mogadishu setbacks were on a par with the setback the United States experienced in Vietnam.

Indeed, sceptics might question if anything significant *has* actually changed since Vietnam.

But could it be any other way? Could the use of US military forces be made 'more democratic'? Could deployment decision-making authority be spread more evenly between the executive and the legislature? Realistically, the answer is probably 'no'. The consensus within both military and political circles remains that effective deployment decision-making is best managed by an informed and empowered few, despite the fact that this clearly contravenes the norms which are typically idealised in most liberal democratic societies. Indeed, this study has shown that this acceptance may even be evident in the collective mindset of legislators on Capitol Hill. Even at times when Congress has appeared to be vigorous in wanting to challenge presidential use-of-force decisions, legislators have consistently demonstrated an unwillingness to undermine either the White House or America's credibility, and have consequently pushed the President only so far. Even when legislators appeared to be at their most adversarial in the thirteen-year period examined in this study, there always seemed to be a line beyond which they would not cross in challenging the President.

Thus whilst it does, to a large degree, appear to contravene the deeply-ingrained liberal democratic expectations within the United States (expectations which appeared to be greatly reinvigorated by the Vietnam experience), the convention of White House dominance of US force deployments is highly unlikely to change.[15] Since it is executive branch unilateralism which seems to prompt much of

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[15] One of the ironies of the criticisms that Presidents persistently face for the single-mindedness of their deployment decisions is that if a President *were* to announce an imminent force deployment and then backtrack from that position due to a lack of domestic support for the deployment in question or because of high levels of domestic criticism, he would likely be broadly lambasted by various political, media and public figures within the United States. Critics would doubtless criticise him not only for demonstrating weakness in such an important policy area but also for compromising the integrity of his

the domestic criticism of, and opposition to, US force deployments, it is certain that these events will continue to be contested; not just because war and military intervention are inherently dangerous and unpredictable, but also because the decision to deploy US troops will continue to be taken by an executive elite centred in the White House.

If the controversy which accompanies force deployments is certain to continue, it is also overwhelmingly likely that the Vietnam experience will continue to provide the thematic platform for this controversy. There is every reason to suspect that the Vietnam experience will continue to be invoked by political, media and elite actors in the United States at times when the President is proposing to deploy US forces. As long as these actors view the invoking of America's Vietnam experience as *either* a genuinely pertinent example as to why US forces should *not* be deployed, *or* as an emotive 'conceptual weapon' which has the capacity to sway opinion and undermine the President when he is taking deployment decisions, the Vietnam experience will continue to be *the* subject of choice for America's domestic deployment-opponents. Combined, these factors suggest not just the likely longevity of the Vietnam Syndrome itself; they also make it overwhelmingly likely that the perspectives, arguments, decisions and criticisms exposed in this study will continue to evidence themselves as the White House responds to conflicts in the future.

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office and – in ordering a deployment and then changing his mind – treating the armed forces with a worrying lack of respect. Such a u-turn would undoubtedly raise serious questions about that President's capabilities and about his policy conviction.

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